

THE
HAUNTED PRIORY:

OR,

THE FORTUNES OF
THE HOUSE OF RAYO.

A ROMANCE

FOUNDED PARTLY ON HISTORICAL FACTS.

—Hic murus ahenius esto,
Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa.

L O N D O N :

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THE HOUSE OF LAYTON

A NOVEL

BY J. H. B. LAYTON

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THE HAUNTED PRIORY.

CHAP. I.

IT was on a cold and stormy December evening in the beginning of the fourteenth century, and not long after that fortunate period when Peter surnamed the Cruel was cut off from a life which he had stained with bloodshed, rapine, and oppression, that a stranger entered a village situated on the banks of the Tagus, near the eastern extremity of the kingdom of Castile in Spain. He was old, and, though withered, of gigantic stature—his large snow-white beard streamed in the fleeting wind—a great coat of black baize was buckled with a leathern belt

B

about

about his loins—he had on his feet sandals instead of shoes, and on his back he carried a large harp; while a long staff, ornamented on the top with a cross, sustained his wearied steps. He stopped at the door of the first neat-looking cottage that presented itself, and, asking whether he could be accommodated with lodging for the night, was answered in the affirmative, and requested to walk in. Being seated, at the desire of the people of the house, he told them that he wanted not only lodging for the night, but food also; and apprised them at the same time that he had nothing to offer them in return, but his prayers and a tune of his harp.

Your prayers we earnestly desire, father, replied a young man—but other return we wish not, nor should accept. Even your harp, whatever delight it might afford us, shall remain untouched, if offered in way of compensation for any little accommodation our poor hut can bestow—And indeed, continued he, I consider it to be a fortunate circumstance that you should have called at this particular season of the year, when, in conformity to the established customs of our country, we are provided with better means of entertaining you than we should be at any other time.

A feeble suffusion of red, that bespoke something more than gratitude, overspread the aged
face

face of the Pilgrim—he laid his hands upon his breast—bent his head in acknowledgment—paused—then sighed and said, while his words seemed struggling for a passage, He that inspireth thy heart, good youth! with the true spirit of beneficence will give thee the reward of it.

A table was then spread with the best provisions which the cottage afforded—and the whole family, consisting of the young man already mentioned, his wife, an old man his father, and two children, sat down with the stranger to a frugal but wholesome supper: a pitcher of tolerable wine concluded the feast, the young man earnestly pressing his aged guest to drink.

The enlivening influence of hospitality, and the unaffected cheerfulness and good nature of the cottagers, insensibly relaxed the austerity of the old Pilgrim, and warmed him into conversation—He listened with pleasure to the simple detail of rustic enjoyment, and the artless acknowledgments of domestic bliss—At length, Happy, says he, my son! most supremely happy is thy lot, if there be happiness found on earth, and you have the wisdom to understand it—God has given thee greater riches than are to be found in the palaces of princes, or the stately domes of the affluent. I remember the time indeed, when the castle of a nobleman, or the arm of a knight, were the never-fail-

ing refuge of distress in whatsoever garb distress appeared, and when the proud turrets of the nobility burst upon the sight of the oppressed or unfortunate, like the first beams of the orient sun on the eye of the night-strayed traveller; cheering, enlivening, and diffusing hope and joy—Then reigned over this happy country Alphonso the wise, the valiant, and the good—But now at every gate savage inhospitality with stern denial rudely opposes the entrance of the poor, and chills the woe-worn heart of misery; but crouches and basely bends the servile knee of respect to the pampered knave of fortune—O gracious God!—from such let my steps be turned for ever.

Ah, father! interrupted the young man, pardon the presumption of youthful zeal, which thus ventures to break on your discourse: but little should I merit your good opinion, if I suffered you uninformed to say that now, which to-morrow's setting sun should see thee retract—To-morrow, God willing, thou shalt see a man.

What man? interrupted the stranger warmly.

Oh! such a man!—the husband of the widow—the father of the orphan—the never-failing resource of the distressed—humble though wealthy—though valiant, gentle as the new-dropt lamb.

Young man, your youthful heart, impressed with some partial act of generosity, some unimportant

portant benefit, rendered perhaps in a moment of capricious virtue, overflows with a gratitude which blinds you ; a gratitude which speaks more for you than for the object of it :—generous yourself, you over-rate the favours conferred upon you by others—This is an error, but I confess an amiable one, and no uncertain pledge of a worthy heart—But who is this man, this very singular character of whom you speak ?

Here every mouth involuntarily opened, and at the same instant pronounced Don Isidor.

Don Isidor !—who ? what Don Isidor ? impatiently exclaimed the Pilgrim.

Don Isidor de Haro, returned the host.

Don Isidor de Haro !—Good Heavens !—Young man, recollect yourself—say—what Don Isidor de Haro—is he of this country—or how long has he lived in it ?

As to his native country, I cannot say any thing with certainty, returned the young man ; but I believe he is a Castilian by birth—He has been here but a short time, yet in that short time has gained the affections of all ranks of people,

Here the old man of the cottage took up the account with—It is only two years since Don Isidor came here to take possession of the castle and estate of Duero, which he honourably obtained from the affection of our good king as a reward for his

services :—where he came from I know not, but I have heard that he was all his life before in the wars.

The stranger rose suddenly from his seat, took two or three hasty strides across the room, sighed bitterly ; then again sitting down seemed entranced in meditation, while the whole family, struck with awful astonishment at his evident perturbation, remained silent—At length, somewhat recovering himself—Pardon, good people, said he, the emotions occasioned by the sudden recollection of some passages of a life strangely checquered with the vicissitudes of fortune.—But this Don Isidor de Haro, then, is a good man, you say, though rich !—Is he married ?

He was married, but his lady had been dead some time before his coming here ; his domestics say that sorrow for her death has driven him to this retired life. His grief seems unaltered and undiminished by time, though it is said that he was at the first quite serene and calm under it.

Has he any children ?—

Yes, father ! he has two : the young gentleman Don Alphonso, his eldest, is now about fourteen years of age.

Alphonso ! has he indeed a son named Alphonso ?

He has—the noblest youth that lives—I have the honour

honour to be employed by Don Isidor as one of his instructors.

Then you are a scholar ?

Thanks to Providence, I am not entirely ignorant of letters, but by no means such a scholar as to instruct that young gentleman in letters—Father Thomas who lives at the castle does that, but I teach and practise him in some of the athletic exercises ; for you must know that there is not one necessary to a soldier, or becoming a gentleman, in which he is not diligently instructed ; nor is there a youth of some years older than him in the country, that can equal him at any of them ;—besides, he is reckoned a most accomplished scholar for ~~his~~ age ; and as to his person, you will judge of that when you see it : I will not pretend to describe it.

Donna Isabella the daughter, continued he, is about eight years old, they say, but has been ever since her mother's death with a sister of Don Isidor, who is married to a nobleman in the court of Portugal ; and it is said by the domestics that she is a child of unequalled beauty ; and that as Don Alphonso shews in every motion the spirit and vigour of Don Isidor, so Donna Isabella every day discloses more and more the delicate lustre of beauty, and excellent temper of her deceased mother.

Don Isidor then must be happy, cried the

Pilgrim. Blest with wealth, power, children such as you describe, and, above all, with the well-merited affections of his vassals and dependents, he must approach as near to happiness as the state of mortality will allow.

Some say not, replied the peasant. Those who have the constant opportunity of observing him remark, that he labours under some hidden melancholy : indeed, all allow that he has never been the same since the death of his lady ; and were it not for the amusements he finds in the instruction of his son, the employment of his mind in contriving and executing acts of beneficence, and in the conversation of the good Father Thomas, it is thought that he must have sunk beneath the weight of his afflictions.—Indeed, Father Thomas is a most excellent man ; for, besides his extraordinary piety, he is extremely charitable, and as a preacher and pastor is unequalled :—but to-morrow, father, you will see them all—Don Isidor will expect you. No one, whatever his condition may be, passes without calling at the castle ; and it is a part of the young gentleman Alphonso's business to watch lest they should accidentally pass by, and to bring them home with him, from whence they generally carry away a good supply of clothes and food. Nay, I doubt not but that while we indulge ourselves here with the enjoyment

joyment of your company, we may run the hazard of disobliging Don Ifidor by not having conducted you to him at first.

Little more passed that night—The fatigues of the day called upon the old stranger to retire to his room, and the cottagers sought, by timely repose, to prepare for the labours of the ensuing day.

C H A P. II.

NEXT morning the Pilgrim, after having bestowed on his hosts a hearty benediction, and his thanks for their hospitable shelter, took his leave, and proceeded on his way towards the castle of Duero. It was little less than a quarter of a league from the cottage to the avenue ; and as he walked very slowly, deeply immersed in thought, the day was advanced when he got to the gate of it. Here seeing that the mansion was at a distance little short of that which he had already come, he sat himself down upon a large stone bench in order to rest himself, and discuss at leisure the variety of subjects which occupied his thoughts from the discourse of the preceding night.—He had not been very long seated when he perceived a number of boys running towards him with the speed of a flock of frightened deer ; one outstripped the rest, and, leaving them far behind, reached the stranger before he had time to form a conjecture upon the novelty of his appearance. If the old man was surprised at the swiftness of his pace, he was
astonished

astonished at his personal appearance, and still more at his address. The full, muscular conformation of his limbs, and the large size of his bones, displayed a stature gigantic for his age, and promised a proportionate share of strength : his face, in which manly fire, dignity and sensibility were blended, glowed with the colours of health and exercise ; while an air at once majestic and insinuating diffused a charm over the whole, that operated like a spell upon the beholder. Addressing the old man with a mixture of respect, admiration and pity, he said, I hope, Señor, you have not been long sitting in this place so unworthy your reverend appearance and years ; should it be so, I shall have to accuse myself of an unpardonable neglect, for which I should certainly receive a severe reproof from Don Isidor. How far have you travelled this morning ? have you breakfasted, or taken any refreshments ? and seeing a moisture collecting in the old man's eyes, Do, dear Sir, get up, and I will lead you to a place where you shall refresh yourself with food and repose, and where you will meet with a hearty reception. Here he reached forth his hand to the Pilgrim, who grasping it in a mixed ecstasy of transport and amazement, snatched it hastily to his lips, and bedewed it with tears of affection. O wondrous youth ! exclaimed he, whosoever thou art, whom God has
formed

formed on a model all his own, lead on—I will follow you any where—every where.—He could no more—utterance was choked in the tumult of his feelings, and he walked slowly along, his young guide holding him by one of his fingers, which he had caught in the excess of his rapture, and still retained with a firm grasp, while the other boys, who had come up one after the other, surrounded them, gazing alternately at the beard, the dress, and the harp which hung at the back of the Pilgrim.

As they proceeded along—Is Don Isidor at home, my dear? interrogated the old man.—No, Señor, he has been abroad for some days; but all the servant have directions to obey punctually my orders in my father's absence, and you shall be well treated though he be not at home. To be sure, he will be greatly delighted on his return, which is now hourly expected, to find you here; for nothing gives him so much pleasure as the company of strangers: at the farthest, he will certainly be back to-morrow: mean time, whenever my talk wearies you, Father Thomas will keep you in conversation more entertaining, as well as more suitable to the gravity of your years.

At length they arrived at the gate of the castle. On its being opened, the stranger was surprised to find himself saluted with as much respect as if
he

he had been a prince, by the keeper, who emphatically pronounced, Welcome, stranger, who-soever thou art, welcome to the castle of Duero ! The old man felt sensations to which he had long been a stranger. As they passed through the court-yard, they were accosted by a servant, who said, Don Alphonso, the horses are ready. It is very well, Pierot, replied the youth ; I will but introduce this stranger to Father Thomas, and attend directly. Upon which the Pilgrim turning to his young friend said, Let me not, I beseech you, young gentleman, detain you from your pleasures. Though the days of youth are past with me, I well remember the painfulness of restraint ; and I already feel too great an interest in your heart, to run the hazard of losing any share of it by taxing your kindness too severely.

Indeed, returned the youth, the delight I feel in attending you would more than compensate for the loss of any pleasure. The servant who just now spoke, came to call me to my riding-master : riding is a part of my daily exercise ; but attending you is a duty much more material in itself, and much more productive of pleasure to me.

Having brought his guest into the house, Alphonso led him into the great hall, placed him in the chair, and gave orders that immediate preparation

ration should be made for his accommodation and refreshment; which Donna Ursula, the house-keeper, received with a heart burning with rage, and a face expressive at once of mortification and contempt.

Going from the great hall, Ursula was met in the passage by Father Thomas.—Here is rare work going forward, said she, in the great hall—I thought what would come of Don Isidor's foolish orders—I suppose we shall have the place full of vermin—Why this is worse again than the work he made about the three ragged rascals of soldiers with the wooden legs.

Patience, patience, good madam! interrupted Father Thomas—What means this torrent of presumptuous expressions to which you have given utterance? why those unseemly gesticulations and strange marks of displeasure?

Go into the parlour and see, replied the furious Ursula—There Don Alphonso has got a beggarly old musician in his honour's great chair, and has ordered breakfast for the fellow in as great state as if he was a cavalier or a knight of St. Jago, although he has not got a maravedi's worth of clothes upon his back, and very likely, if he could get clear off, would rob the house of whatever he could lay his hands on.

Woman,

Woman, interrupted the reverend Thomas in a tone of stern reproof, hold thy sinful tongue, nor dare presumptuously to give utterance to such expressions in my hearing; obey with silent respect the orders you have received; recollect that you are a servant, and dare not to call in question the commands of him that feeds you: your want of charity demands a penance of another kind, which at a proper time I will not fail to exact; but your insolence now calls for the chastisement which disobedient, faucy servants deserve at the hands of their masters: begone—do your duty, and let me hear no more of your comments on my noble child's conduct, or I vow I will speak to Don Isidor on his return, and make him turn you to the world, and consign you for an existence to that charity which you would deny to others.

To be sure—as your Reverence says, exclaimed the terrified Ursula.

Begone! I say—and let me hear no more of it.

Thus saying, Father Thomas proceeded to the great hall. Upon his entrance Alphonso sprang across it, took him by the hand, and led him over to the old man, who immediately rose, bent his aged knees, and besought his blessing; which the holy man bestowed upon him, raising him at the same

same time from the ground, and replacing him in the great chair.

Father Thomas then took a chair, seated himself, and, having surveyed the stranger with an earnest and scrutinizing eye, sighed, and pressed the hand of Alphonso with a warmth expressive of approbation; then addressing himself to the old man, Have you travelled far this morning, Señor? said he.

Only from the adjoining village, returned the other, where I was treated with a cheerfulness and hospitality that would charm the stubborn heart of misanthropy itself, by a young man, who said that he was, if I am not mistaken, one of this young gentleman's preceptors.

It is Juanico, cried Alphonso in rapture—If Juanico was able, he would be as generous as the first nobleman in Spain.

Alphonso left the stranger and Father Thomas in discourse, while he attended his duty in the menage—When that was dispatched, he impatiently returned, and found he had finished his breakfast. The whole day he employed in shewing him the gardens, woods, vineyards and castle: the armoury particularly attracted the old man's attention—he looked with an eye of skilful curiosity at every part, each in its turn. Do you not wish,
my

my dear, said he to Alphonso, to be able to wear those? I do very much, returned the youth; nay, I am pretty sure that I am able even now; for I can run with Sancho Perez, the biggest boy you saw with me, on my back, against Juanico who entertained you in the village; and I am sure Sancho is twice as heavy as one of these.—And why do you not try? interrogated the other.—I am afraid, replied Alphonso, that Don Isidor would suspect me of vanity, and I know there is nothing he hates so much as vanity.—My dear, my noble child, cried the Pilgrim, modesty like yours should not go unrewarded; and if Don Isidor will deign to pay any attention to a poor man like me, you shall on his return have a trial.—Ah, Sir, returned Alphonso, my father regards the poor as much as the rich, where he finds them honest and brave—but surely you are not a poor man—I think you a very great man.—An undescribable sensation thrilled to the old man's heart. He seized Alphonso in his arms, held him for some time clasped in his embrace, and wept. Alphonso wept too—he could not tell why—his young heart was agitated with unaccustomed sensations of delight, and he smiled through his tears: the lustre of natural majesty broke through the sable weeds that veiled it, and the dignified mind

of the youth, in estimating the worth of his fellow-creature, laid no account on that of his clothes.

Next morning, while Alphonso and his new friend were engaged in the armoury, the trampling of horses announced the arrival of Don Isidor. Father Thomas met and retired with him into his closet: as soon as permission was granted him, Alphonso flew to embrace his father: when the mutual manifestations of affection were over, O father! said Alphonso, I have got you a visitor in the house.—So I have been told by Father Thomas, my dear; I entirely approve of your behaviour to him, and thank you for so very honourably representing me in my absence: I am the more pleased with your attention to him, because he is so very poor a man.

Poor! repeated Alphonso—surely, father, you mistake—he is not poor—I never saw a grander man in my life.

Do not depreciate your own charity, my dear, said Father Thomas—you cannot but have observed the extreme poverty of his dress.

His dress! No indeed, said Alphonso, I took no notice of his dress: if it be poor, as you say, I am sure I am sorry for it, for I cannot help loving him. And turning to Don Isidor, I respect him as
much

much—almost as much as if it was yourself:—then he has such a commanding air—and he talks so grandly of war, and honour, and courage, and armour, that I am sure he would delight you.

What Alphonso says is not entirely void of foundation, said Father Thomas.

Well, then, said Don Isidor, tell your friend that I kiss his hands, and shall be glad to see him by and by in the great hall.

He is there now, Sir, said Alphonso; I hear the sound of his harp.

Then let us go to him, my dear.

On their entering into the hall the old man rose, and, with a deportment majestic beyond expression, saluted Don Isidor; who, on his part, received him, not with that arrogant affectation of humility which mortifies more than any other exertion of pride, but with that unfeigned condescension which made every benefit he conferred valued less for the magnitude of the gift than the cheerfulness of the giver. In truth, he felt in the present case a veneration, if not awe, imposed upon him by the figure before him.

I will not, said the old man, do so much injustice to the character of Don Isidor de Haro, as

to suppose, that the footing on which he finds a person of my humble appearance in his castle will subject Don Alphonso to the imputation of rashness, or me to the censure of forward intrusion. Don Isidor may be assured, that the kindness of the youth (flattering though it was) should not have been accepted, had not universal report persuaded me that it would have been approved by his father.

Venerable Señor, returned Don Isidor, I hope you will find that your opinion, and the report which gave it birth, are not entirely misplaced. My boy, whose whole life has been one continued series of acts the most grateful to my feelings, has never done one more productive of satisfaction to me, than procuring me the honour of your company. I am not, continued he, a man of much ceremony, and shall therefore only tell you, that my guests are, to all intents of hospitality, masters of this castle; and I beg that you will consider yourself so. Do me the favour to take your seat, and I will again wait upon you as soon as I have given some necessary orders.

When Don Isidor retired to his apartment he could not help reflecting on the extraordinary appearance of the stranger. Pilgrims and itine-
rant

rant bards he had often seen, but never one that at all resembled this, in whom he imagined he could distinguish the remains of the warrior, and the defaced ruins of the man of dignity. That he was of a rank far above his present seeming, he had not the smallest doubt; but what that rank had been, or how he had fallen from it, he could not conceive, and he feared to enquire: even conjecture was lost in the wide field of calamitous events. While he was embarrassed in this confusion of thoughts, Alphonso entered. There is something, my child, said Don Isidor, in this old veteran's manners, which exacts more than common respect, and bespeaks him of superior rank, though fallen. I confess an invincible curiosity to know who and what he is; but, as the recollection of such things must be painful, I will rather content myself with ignorance of the matter than indulge my curiosity at the risk of giving a single pang to his aged heart: I will therefore be silent on the subject, unless he chooses of his own accord to disclose himself to me. At all events, the great hall is a place where the difficulty he may have to be communicative must be increased by the frequent entrance of servants. I wish, my dear, to acquit myself to you of a vice which I have so often

and so vehemently reprobated to you, and therefore declare, that not idle curiosity, but an anxious desire to heal, if possible, the wounds that fortune may have inflicted on him, induces me to this ; I will therefore direct one of the servants to wait upon him with my respects, and inform him that I shall be obliged to him for his company in my closet.

Then, Sir, said Alphonso, I had better go myself : will it not appear more respectful ?

Thank you for your hint, my child, said Don Isidor : you speak my very soul.

Alphonso was not long away, when he returned leading in the old man in the same manner as he had led him up the avenue. Don Isidor was surprised at perceiving that he had brought his harp with him. Being seated, at the desire of Don Isidor, he proceeded, without a word, to tune his harp, while his face exhibited marks of strong emotions, and seemed pregnant with extraordinary events. Don Isidor would not break in upon him. After a short prelude, he began to play, accompanying it with his voice. Melancholy had set her stamp on every note he sung. Don Isidor, who heedfully attended, to catch from his verses a clue to his sorrows, was for a time all ear.—

He

He sung of fortune and fame ruined, of friends and children lost, and of the miseries of an unconnected, isolated existence here. Then he sung of war, till his harp, seeming to catch the enthusiasm of its master, struck such martial sounds as roused the blood of Don Isidor, and filled the young Alphonso with an ardour he was before a stranger to. Hence he skilfully turned to the happy state of Don Isidor, whose armour hung up at once a monument of its owner's former prowess and present peaceful honours, and a lesson of emulation to the rising spirit of his son. Don Isidor at this part turned his eyes, which before had lost their functions in attention to the song, on the old man, whose face, glowing with the awakened enthusiasm of his spirit, beamed with the glories of the warrior and the bard. In mute amazement he for a while gazed, tracing the lineaments of a countenance familiar to him, yet unknown—thrice he essayed to speak, but, lost in surmise, astonishment, and doubt, as often faltered. At length, with difficulty mastering the tumult within him, he said, Ah, Sire! am I mistaken, or do I behold—do I see the once beloved and ever revered—the glorious—Unfortunate Baron de Rayo! interrupted the old man.

Don Isidor had barely strength sufficient to rise and throw his arms about the Baron's neck—there, locked in a firm embrace, he held him for some time, speechless with delight, while Alphonso endeavoured to encircle both in his arms, kissed the garments of both by turns, and wept and laughed together. At length Don Isidor's great heart finding vent, he exclaimed—How, how is this?—Alas! alas! do I live to see this day—the great Baron de Rayo, the glorious and the good—the plume of science, the thunderbolt of war!—Do I live to see him thus?—do I live to see my first friend, my early director, he whose instruction and example first called my youthful spirit forth, pointed out the path to glory, and led the way to deeds of pith and virtue—divested of his honours and distinctions—travelling unattended, unaccommodated, like a minstrel, through the country!—Why, why is this? Penance it cannot be, for thy soul was as incapable of guilt as thy spirit of dishonour. Say, then, my friend, my parent, how comes this to pass? and why is the transport which I feel at thus finding thee restored as it were from the dead, counterpoised with the anguish of seeing you thus fallen? Say, too, what of Gonzalvo, the dear companion of my youthful days?

All

All this time Alphonso stood in a gaze of wonder—the tears coursing each other in quick succession down his cheeks.

Don Isidor, said the Baron, whatever my griefs may be, I have yet room left in my bosom for a large portion of joy to see you once more, and to see you so happy. Here Don Isidor shook his head.—I say again happy, continued the Baron. The human mind, prone to discontent, will, if it lack real cause of misery, forge for itself stings and arrows out of the best benefits of life. You have had your afflictions, and I have some conception of them; but by the time you have heard my tale, you will allow, that all the sorrows you have suffered were joys, compared with mine. But see this tender lamb, his heart unused to aught but happiness, shrinks at the bare suggestion of our woes; let us spare him a recital which would only shock his gentle nature, and serve no purpose of instruction or utility. Another time——

My dear, said Don Isidor, speaking to Alphonso, could you not find something to amuse you for a short time?

Yes, Sir, certainly, said Alphonso: there is a suit of armour below, which your noble guest observed this morning would fit me; and, asking me if I
ever

ever had one on, and I telling him not, declared he wished to be the first to arm me. That, with Don Isidor's permission, I will go and get cleaned up, that I may have the pleasure at once of trying it, and complying with our guest's desire.

Which is it? said Don Isidor: is it mine? Yours! Lord! no, Sir—it is the small one, the French cavalier's.

Do as you please, my dear, in this instance; and for the future, in all cases in which this gentleman directs you, remember that my advice or concurrence may be dispensed with: go, then, my child, and on what has just now passed between my friend and me let your lips be sealed with silence.

Alphonso bowed in token of assent, and left the room.

As soon as he was gone, It is an old observation, said the Baron, conceived in wisdom and founded on experience, that wherever there is flattery there is a fool and a knave in the case. I, for my part, think better of both of us than to offer flattery, or expect it to be received: I shall therefore frankly declare, that in that youth, who has now left us, Don Isidor possesses a treasure more than equivalent to all the losses of his life.

Why

Why it is, I know not, but it is certainly a truth, that, from the instant I beheld him, I felt myself so tied to him by the strongest cords of affection, that to separate him from me would be to tear every ligament of my heart asunder.—But I delay my promised history; and much I fear that the pain some passages of it cannot fail to give you, will be but poorly requited by the gratification of your curiosity.

C H A P. III.

The Baron's Relation.

ALPHONSO Baron de Rayo, thour well remembereft, was of no mean diftinction—his caſtle was as ſtrong, his wealth as great, his vaſſals as numerous, as any peer's in the kingdom of Caſtile, and his renown in war, and favour with his prince, not leſs the topic of admiration with the nation at large than the ſubject of envy to his enemies:—his fortunes ſeemed founded on a rock, and his honours and domeſtic circumſtances to bid defiance to the ſtorms of adverſity—ſuch they were when laſt we parted.

Heaven had ſpared me one daughter, the only remaining child of a numerous progeny; the reſt followed their beauteous mother to the grave ere yet they reached the years of puberty. This and more thou already knoweſt; but as it makes a link in the great chain of events I propoſe to relate, I chooſe to be circumſtantial, even though it
ſhould

should render me tedious. In the possession of that daughter, and the resignation which, as a Christian, I owed to the will of Heaven, I buried the remembrance of all my losses; and failing in male issue, and being determined never to marry again, I adopted the son of my sister, the young Henry Gonsalvo, reared him as my own, and hoped, by my influence with the king, to get the title and honours of the old house of Rayo entailed upon him and his issue.

At this time your father, the younger brother of a respectable branch of our house, bespoke my patronage for you—I took you to my castle, and, fancying that I saw in you the dawnings of future greatness, determined to train you early up to arms. Your progress and unfolding powers justified my hopes; nor can I recollect many passages of my life that pleased me more than beholding, in the brotherly contests of emulation between you and my Henry, the victory hang now on this side now on that, till both were exhausted; for so perfect was the equality between you at the close of ten years, in which you continued together under my eye, that it remained doubtful which excelled in vigour, dexterity, and martial ardour; or which in tenderness, fidelity, and mutual attachment. I looked upon you both
with

with pride—with hopes—and flattered myself that in each I saw a second self arising. But what was my exultation, when, our glorious king Alphonso calling me to the war against the Moors, I brought you both with me, and found that your actions exceeded my most sanguine expectation! The king, you know, on the taking of Algeziras, honoured you with knighthood, and gratified my fond wish by entailing the family honours and title on Henry Gonsalvo.

When our most beloved monarch, the friend and patron of our house, and the father of his people, died at the fatal siege of the Moorish fort Gibraltar, I retired in despondence and grief, and brought Gonsalvo with me; while you, arrested by a thirst for glory, and disdaining a life of inactive dependance, remained behind. We returned—Henry loaded with honours, and I exulting in the reflection, that the reputation of our family, for ages celebrated in the field, and distinguished for valour and loyalty, was likely to suffer no diminution in the hands of its new representative.

We had not been long at home, when I had the additional satisfaction to perceive an event ripening which I had from the first anxiously desired, and which alone was wanting to give full

completion to all the wishes or views I had on this side the grave: in short, I perceived that a reciprocal affection was growing apace in the bosoms of Gonsalvo and my daughter; and being determined, neither on the one hand to injure their love by anticipated concurrence, nor on the other to throw any obstacles in their way by too vigilant observation, I gave the young couple just as much time for uninterrupted communication as I thought would serve to strengthen their flame without consuming their affection. Every thing turned out correspondent to my intentions. Henry, fearful of the event, retired to his father's house, and from thence gave me, by letter, a disclosure of his passion, with many expressions of apprehension; and above all, deprecating my suspicions of perfidy and breach of hospitality in having paid his addresses privately to my daughter. I spoke to Maria with all the delicacy I could; though I already knew, desired to be made the friendly confidant of her sentiments; and assured her that my consent should not be wanting to make her happy. Overspread with blushes, and almost sinking with apprehension and diffidence, she modestly avowed her love. O Isidor! her appearance, her manner, her every word and look at that instant recalled to my mind the dear deceased partner of my soul,

when

when blushing she gave herself to my arms.— Here the Baron averted his face, and covering his eyes with his hand, remained a few moments in silent agony. But recollecting himself, he exclaimed—This should not be—but sad remembrance will obtrude itself.

A tear fell from Don Isidor, and the Baron resumed his story.

At this period Peter called forth all his forces to crush a confederacy formed against him by some discontented nobles, at the head of which were his mother and his half brother. Peter was the legitimate son of our lamented king Alphonso; and I thought it my duty to defend him, without examining the merits of his cause. Gonfalso and I accordingly set out to join the royal standard. I will not enlarge upon the 'disgust the tyrant's whole conduct gave us: it however served to lessen, if not entirely remove the regret I felt at finding that you had long been a follower of the fortunes of Henry Count Transamare, his brother. You were right, as it has turned out; but I acted upon principles of loyalty and allegiance, and find my consolation in the consciousness of intentional rectitude. To be succinct, we overcame the rebellion, and Gonfalso and I returned to our peaceful castle, with no other reward or compensation for

our pains than the laurels we gathered in the field, which, under such banners as we fought beneath, were withered ere they could be plucked.

Immediately on our return, the nuptials of my children were celebrated with all the pomp and dignity becoming their illustrious house; and my happiness soon received further augmentation by Henry's announcing to me the pregnancy of his wife. The wished for yet dreaded moment at length arrived, and gave to our fond arms a noble boy: here my soul seemed to recline, and rest itself as after a long fatiguing journey. The child was scarcely a minute from my sight—he was the delight of my soul—I hung in raptures over him, anticipating the opening of his manhood, and drawing to myself, in fancy's flattering colours, the picture of his future form; the vigour and symmetry of those limbs, then in a state of shapeless, helpless inaction; the fire of that spirit then reposed in torpid apathy; and the variously expressive beauties of that face, which then exhibited no trace of sensation, save the transitory impressions of accidental pain, or the passing dimples of an unmeaning smile.

A short time after this Peter again called us forth. His reiterated breaches of faith, his cruelties and exactions, raised up against him a formidable

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power,

power, headed by Henry Count Transtamare, assisted by the renowned Bertrand Guesclin. I thought it our duty to attend him, nor could we, however willing at such a time to remain at home, decline the summons without tarnishing, or at least hazarding our fame. We therefore prepared to depart; and the young child, which was named after me, Alphonso, was put out to nurse in a village near the castle, my daughter being determined to attend her husband to Cordova. From this resolution, however extraordinary, nothing could dissuade her; and every thing being done that could render the journey convenient to her, we set out, and, without any incident worthy of relation, arrived at Cordova, which to our astonishment we found invested by Peter; his enormities having driven the inhabitants to the desperate measure of declaring openly against him. We were, however, treated with every mark of distinction by the gentry round the place; and the singular heroism and conjugal affection of Maria raised her so high in every one's esteem, and gained her such universal respect, that her condition was rendered much more tolerable than we could possibly have hoped for.

Among those who were most forward in doing honour to our family, was the Marquis de Punalada, a man of an illustrious house, and high in
favour

favour with the king: he had formerly been acquainted with Gonsalvo, and now renewed his intimacy with a zeal that gave us the more pleasure, as the capricious and violent temper of the king made the condition of all those who were not favourites, either immediately or collaterally, extremely precarious and disagreeable. We had little time for the cultivation of this intimacy. Henry was ordered off on a service of considerable danger and difficulty; and I was ordered, together with all the elder barons, to remain with the army at the siege, in order that the king might avail himself of our counsels—while Maria retired with the countess Dalmado to the city of Eceja, to wait the return of her husband.

I shall not interrupt the thread of my story with a detail of the operations of the army, which perhaps you already know as well as I; but tell you, that here I was informed that you had persisted with the other adherents of Count Transamare, with whom the tyrant broke faith so wickedly at Toledo. Something, no doubt the stings of a guilty conscience, fretted Peter, and inwardly preyed upon him: naturally ill-disposed, he grew daily worse, and the noble loyalty of subjects never was put to so severe a trial as in adhering to the cause of that weak, worthless tyrant.

For a considerable time I had heard nothing from Gonfhalvo or my daughter; I began to feel an uneasiness unusual to me, at a neglect for which I was utterly unable to account, when one day I was put under arrest, and hurried before the king.

Unconscious of having committed any offence to merit such a gross indignity, I was busied in forming conjectures on the strange event; when going through the camp to the king's pavilion, I heard a herald proclaiming my son Henrico Gonfhalvo a traitor. More at a loss than before, I dismissed the enquiry into the causes from my mind, and only looked to the consequences, which I determined to endure with that unshaken fortitude and dignity that became a noble Castilian.

Arrived at the royal pavilion, I found Peter seated on his throne, a number of the nobility around him, and, as usual, the Marquis de Punalada at his right hand, in conference with him, while his face appeared convulsed with a conflict of all the horrid passions that shake human nature, struggling for the mastery of his soul. Perceiving me, he turned abruptly from the Marquis de Punalada, and, addressing himself to me, sternly said—When foul rebellion stains the branches of
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a family, and well-founded suspicion falls upon the chief stock, what reparation does justice to an injured monarch demand—what measures do his security require? Say, Baron de Rayo! I speak to you.

When treason or disloyalty is proved against the house of Rayo, my liege lord, returned I, myself will be the first to pronounce the sentence of severest rigour, and call the execution of it justice.

That base dissimulation (interrupted Peter furiously) which, under the plausible pretext of rigour, and an affected zeal for justice, assumes the garb of innocence, but marks more strongly the deep-laid treachery of your views, and bids us but the more beware of danger.

None, answered I, but the disloyal and treacherous ever found an enemy in, or had cause to fear danger from, our house—and who but your majesty dares accuse us of it? Let the villain slanderer, be he who he may, come forth, and my life shall be the pledge that I refute the calumny: and sure no common calumniator it must be, who could shake that confidence which the long and faithful services of ages have justly entitled the family of Rayo to claim from the crown of Castile.

Dost thou then, dissembler as thou art, interrupted the king, pretend ignorance? Why fled thy rebel son, and joined the cause of Transamare? Knowest thou nought of this? or wilt thou presume to say, that he who knew no thought but thine, who moved but by thy guidance, and yielded to no impulse but the impulse of thy spirit, should have taken such a step without thy knowledge and concurrence? Thy nephew too preceded him in his rebellion: but he has paid the forfeit of his crime, and so shalt thou; we will shew the proud Rayo that to offend us is some danger, and that, as we raised, so we can lay his honours in the dust.

Gracious God! what was my indignation!—Rage for some time deprived me of speech, almost of sense. After some pause I rallied my scattered senses—The honours of Rayo, said I, your majesty has neither raised nor can extinguish—this body, it is true, is in your power, and must endure every outrage that jealous tyranny may choose to inflict upon it; but the honours of myself and family shall mock thy threatened rage, soar beyond the reach of thy poor revenge, and gain new vigour from the strokes of persecution.

Mark, cried Peter in a rage, mark ye, my lords,

lords, the recreant defies us—Take him from our sight, and hurry him straight to prison.

Yet, ere I go, said I, let me, in presence of these noble barons, exculpate myself from a charge the bare thoughts of which raise in my soul scorn, abhorrence, and indignation. Here my feelings, like a torrent suddenly contracted, overbore my reason, and I added, Disclaiming all attachment and respect to him who wrongs me, and aims a deadly blow at all my well-earned honours, I declare that merely to satisfy my peers I stoop to this vindication. Though Peter may have his own reasons for doubting the allegiance of any of his subjects, the virtues of Rayo might shield him from the charge of dissimulation.

I then turned to the knights and nobles. Peter, weak, wicked creature, biting his lips with internal agitation—My lord, said I, why my son has disappeared I cannot conjecture, nor did I know that event (if it has happened, which I yet doubt) till I came into this presence: that he has gone over to the army of our adversaries I cannot believe, as I know that his allegiance to the throne was equal to my own. Over this some strange mystery hangs; a mystery which that God, who sees and knows the inmost recesses of the heart, bears me witness I am utterly unable to get to the

bottom of: yet still I cannot believe that he would go and leave his wife a hostage, for sure he loved her, and——

Mark the subtle traitor, exclaimed the king—he would insinuate that he knew not of his daughter's flight.

My daughter! Mother of God, exclaimed I, is it possible? What new wonders are yet for me to hear? what new mysteries to be unfolded? The barons seemed struck with my emotion.

Yet, my lords, rejoined I, let me turn to my own conduct, and shew that I am abused.

At the time that this war broke out, and the king called upon his people to rise in arms, my years might have exempted me, without imputation, from the services of war. Grown grey in the service of successive kings, dignified with honours, and covered with the rewards of a monarch who knew how to estimate my services, I might have stayed at home and enjoyed the repose necessary to my years. Did I then come forth at these years to tarnish all the glories of a well-spent life, act the base dissembler's part, and play the hoary fool? I ask you, my lords, is it possible? Yet am I without proof, enquiry, or even a full knowledge of the charge against me, treated as a criminal, a criminal against myself, my fortunes,

tunes, and my family. Observe, my lords, how this story hangs together: if we had determined on the project of which we stand accused, what hindered us from executing it in a manner and at a time more suitable to our views? Why delay the desertion to that time and place which alone could render it hazardous? Why should I be left behind? The cloud of mystery which hangs over it disqualifies me from speaking as I would do.—But my part must appear plain and manifestly innocent; and as to my son, I pledge my life for his fidelity.

Here the king broke off my discourse; and, rising furiously, ordered me into confinement. I was hurried out of the pavilion, and the next day was conducted under a strong guard, and lodged a close and solitary prisoner in a cell in the tower of Siguenca.

For a long time I was utterly incapable of reflection, or of entering into an investigation of this unaccountable turn in our affairs: all within was wild chaos, confusion, and uproar. Time at length began to calm the perturbations of my mind, and the tumults within gradually subsided into deliberation. I found myself, however, as much at a loss as before—In vain did I turn over every incident of my life that could, by forced possibility,

sibility, have given rise to the error; all seemed more strange, unaccountable and inexplicable, the more it was examined; and I had at length nothing left to think, but that my children, by some means which I could not develop, had been sacrificed to fraud and the subtle designs of some hidden enemies, envious perhaps of the honours of our house.

O my Maria! O my Henry! would I exclaim, where are you, my comforts? Do you still live, or has the ruffian hand of barbarous power assailed your precious lives? O gracious Lord of all, if it be so, give the guilty to the vengeance of these arms, old and withered though they be, and thy servant will depart in peace!

Thus, day after day and month after month elapsed: having no diversity of incidents to check existence, I had no objects by which to measure time, and was uncertain what number of years I passed in that dreary mansion. Losing all hope of revisiting the world, I almost lost all desire too, and had laid my account with ending my days in that dismal prison; when one night I was visited by a dream or a vision, and to this hour I cannot determine which. Methought, as I lay in my bed, Gonsalvo called to me. I looked up, and beheld him

him pale, emaciated, with every appearance of wildness and distraction in his face and air; I looked at him and wept; then stretched forth my hands to embrace him; he eluded my endeavour. Alas! my son, said I, after so long an absence, is it denied me to—Sire, said he, interrupting me, it availeth not—depart you hence, and seek my lost child. I essayed to speak, but could not—I endeavoured to call to him—he baffled all my efforts, and vanished, leaving me in an agony of consternation and grief.

Next morning the impression of this phantasm was so strong upon my senses, that I was almost at a loss to determine whether it was a reality or a dream: while I was in a train of contemplation on it, the keeper of the prison entered my chamber—I asked him whether any one had been admitted to me in the night—He said, not; but at the same time informed me, that he had that morning received orders to discharge from confinement all persons imprisoned there; Peter the Cruel being dead, and Henry Count Transamare, who killed the tyrant, having succeeded to the throne.

The coincidence of the dream with this my deliverance made an impression on me difficult to conceive, impossible to be described. I thought

I saw

I saw the finger of Providence pointing out the way to some strange and momentous revelation. The tumult of my feelings, surprise, joy, astonishment, and suspense, was more than my enfeebled state could support. I was scarcely able to move, and for some days was unable to leave Sigüenza : when at length I was able, I was at a loss what way to go ; but at last determined to seek the Marquis de Punalada, of whose friendship for Gonzalvo I entertained no doubt, and who would therefore be most likely to give me information of his fate. With weary steps I reached the city of Burgos : there I had the mortification to hear that my estates were confiscated, and my blood attainted ; and was moreover told, that the Marquis had quitted court, and retired to his estate in Andalusia, long before the death of Peter. Thither, feeble and exhausted though I was, I repaired—After a long, wretched, and fatiguing journey, I reached a village near his castle, and was told, that he then and mostly resided on his estate on the banks of the river Ebro. I was surprised at this intelligence, which nevertheless was sufficiently confirmed by the people of the village. I determined to find him. So recommending myself to the Almighty, and beseeching him to endue me with strength and patience, I again turned my back on Andalusia.

Andalusia. Not being able to travel in the state suitable to my rank, the little means I possessed being just exhausted, and moreover recollecting that it might be prudent for me to pass as much as possible unnoticed, I entered the town of Cordova, equipped myself as you see, and then proceeded on my journey, living occasionally at convents, and on the beneficence of the hospitable people of the country. My way was long; and as I walked slowly, and was obliged to rest frequently, it was a considerable time before I got to the banks of the Ebro. The night before I reached them I was visited by a dream nearly resembling that which I had in the prison of Sigüenza: Gon-salvo came in as before, and repeated the words, Sire, seek my lost child! As before, I strove to embrace him, when methought he turned from me, uttering a sigh that seemed to shake his frame to pieces.—We can no more, he said, and walked away from me; when methought a ghastly wound on his head yawned and discovered his brains, and the blood ran in a torrent down his back.—My soul, which till that minute was a stranger to the impressions of fear, sunk with horror at the sight—I trembled, gave a loud and hollow groan, and awoke in an agony.—I ardently longed for the return of day. It came, and brought no consolation—

tion—My dream had banished every gleam of comfort from my soul, and left nothing there but gloom, horror, and darkness—yet shall I own to you, that at intervals the pride of the warrior broke in upon my reveries, and painted to me imaginary prospects of revenge !

I traversed the banks of the Ebro for many leagues, enquiring in vain for the Marquis de Punalada, till I came near that part which once owned me for its lord ; a place I should above all others have avoided, were it not for the hopes of seeing my grandchild, or at least hearing of him—an indulgence which I deferred only for the purpose of being first satisfied about his father and mother. As I approached, therefore, I felt all the torments of suspense and apprehension. At length, however, I arrived within a short way of the castle. It was evening when I knocked at the door of the first peasant's cottage within the boundaries of the lordship of Montalto. A stranger appeared, who rudely demanded my business. I told him I desired to see Juan, the man of the house. If you mean Juan Navarro, returned he, you must look for him somewhere else. What, my friend, said I, is not this his cottage ? No, returned the clown ; it was once his, but thank God and my master, it is mine now. And pray who is your master ?

master? The Marquis de Punalada. The Marquis de Punalada! Yes, the Marquis de Punalada. The Baron de Rayo, its former owner, has been put to death for high treason, and the king gave that castle yonder, and this estate, to my master: it is not above three days since he left it, and went to his other estate in Andalusia. O Heavens! what were my feelings!—how I supported them I know not. The circumstance that Punalada, the specious friend of Gonsalvo, rather than any other person, should have got possession of our confiscated property, struck like lightning a thought across my mind, a suspicion of an act too full of horror, guilt, and wickedness, for man to perpetrate, and in the fulness of my heart I exclaimed, O cursed, cursed villain!—The fellow, full of resentment at my abuse (as I suppose he thought of himself), lifted his arm to strike me—I smote him to the ground, and retired. Proceeding hastily to the next cottage, which was that in which my grandson was nursed, I received an answer there to nearly the same effect.

Apprehending that the peasant, recovering, might collect a number of his lord's vassals to assist him, and fall upon me, in which case resistance or expostulation would be equally vain, I turned into a wood, and, by a well-known path,
arrived

arrived at a village out of the power of the lord of the castle of Montalto; and calling at a cottage, took up my lodging for the night. Determined upon getting the best information I could, and above all to find out where my grandson was lodged, I prevailed upon the son of my host to go to the castle and the contiguous village, and make the necessary enquiries. He returned soon, and brought me an account that there was not one of the former inhabitants living on the lordship; that all were put out and replaced by strangers, nor could it be found where any of them went.

You will allow that nothing could now be added to the measure of my afflictions, it was already running over. Lost, then, I exclaimed—lost indeed, my Gonfalso! My Maria! lost is thy child! I fear, yourselves too! Where, ah where, blessed Father! shall my sorrows end?—whither shall I go—where turn me to find my children, if yet they live?—Alas, I know not. Here, then, lay thee down, wretched old man, and patiently await the hand of death, which soon shall visit thee and heal thy woes; or go to thy castle, assert thy right against the base vassals that possess it—slay all who oppose thee—till, thyself slain, thou shalt pull down a number to the grave with thee, and fall gloriously

ously amidst the ruins of thy enemies! Here, stifled with rage, and bursting with the swellings of affliction, I fell on the floor in a state of insensibility, to which a languor succeeded that in all probability tended to save me from the more acute effects of my passion. The good people of the cottage, much affected with my emotions, used every little art to console me, execrating the wretches who could aim a blow at a head so white as mine. Urged by their repeated solicitations, I at length took some food and went to bed: here, sleep, which usually flies from the couch of the unhappy, led on by fatigue visited me. Still I was haunted with the former dream, with little variation; and determined to pursue, as far as I could, the admonition. I therefore first repaired to Toledo, to enquire of the chief officers of Henry Transamare's army, whether Gonsalvo had ever gone over; and after a most minute investigation found that no such event had ever taken place: I thereupon resolved to commit myself to the direction of Providence, and search for my children, either till I found them or lost my life. Under this determination I first visited the court of Navarre, then that of Portugal; thence crossed Spain again over to the kingdom of Arragon: finding no trace any where of the objects of my pursuit, I formed the

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desperate resolution of going to the Moorish territory of Grenada, on the bare possibility of Gonzalvo's having been by some unlucky means enslaved by the Infidels. Two years weary travelling, supported by the alms of the charitable, could not deter me from my purpose : I therefore turned my face that way, and proceeded, supported by the hope which the frequent visitation of my dream had insensibly inspired me with. The second night I took up my lodging among the charitable fathers of a Franciscan monastery. I informed them of my intention, giving them at the same time my reasons for it, and disclosing to them the whole of my misfortunes. One of them, a grave, wise and learned man, undertook to dissuade me from it : he remarked, that the disappearance of my son and daughter happened in a place and at a time that the Moors could not, by any possibility, have been instrumental to it : he said, that he thought the much greater probability was, that they had been, for some hidden purpose, cut off by the cruel hand of Peter ; and that by going to Grenada, I should only bring down additional misery on myself, and lose the small probability there was of recovering or finding out my grandchild ; and he finally advised (in which all agreed with him) that I should rather go to Toledo, apply to the

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snatched

snatched the child to my bosom, when looking down, I perceived that the helmet falling had killed his father, who lay bleeding in agony on the ground. My woe and horror were unutterable: I turned the point of my javelin towards my breast, determined to rush upon it, when methought you held me, and struggling with me, snatched the fatal weapon from my hand, and said, Grieve not, be patient, all shall yet be well, I will be myself a father to Alphonso. In endeavouring to throw my arms about you I awoke.

This new dream furnished my heated imagination with new materials to work upon; a train of new ideas took place, and a new plan arose from them. Perhaps, thought I, Isidor may yet live—perhaps uncorrupted too.—I will seek him out thought I, and leave the rest to the great Disposer of events.

I arose early next morning and set forward on my way to the court of Henry, with an intention to ascertain the fact, whether you were dead or not; and I confess I was startled at the apparent past derangement of my mind, which could so long have dwelt upon my misery without thinking of so obvious a remedy as this probably offered. I travelled some days, when accidentally passing through your village, I chanced to hear your name mentioned

mentioned in such terms as convinced me, that I was near the habitation of a friend: and now I am here, I must confess that I find myself, I know not why, in a state of more internal composure than I have for years been accustomed to; and weak though it may appear to you, the frequent visitations of Gonsalvo, and his injunctions in the dream, and the subsequent one, in which you appeared, coupled with the circumstance of meeting you, the name and personal appearance of this lovely youth, together with a confused crowd of other ideas, rush on my mind with a force which reason cannot resist. Here he paused, and fixing his eyes steadily on Don Isidor, as if to catch every passage of his mind through his eyes, he continued—Tell me, Isidor, in pity to a father's feelings tell me, knowest thou, or hast thou heard ought of Gonsalvo or of my daughter? and oh say, nor delay to solve the torturing doubts of my wretched care-worn heart—say—Who is this youth—this Alphonso? Oh say! for much my mind misgives me—and sure if I be mistaken the strong resemblance warrants me: in him Gonsalvo all appears in renovated youth, moves in every step, and speaks in every sentence that he utters.

Don Isidor, struck with astonishment at the conclusion of this story, stared for some time at

the Baron, transfixed in silence. If the misfortunes of a family he so entirely loved, affected him with sorrow, the whimsical transition from it to his son smote him to the soul : he loved the Baron with more than filial tenderness, and as he always admired him for his extraordinary valour, so he revered him for his superior wisdom ; but to see his soul so shaken, and his understanding so enfeebled as to yield up his reason to the mere illusions of fancy, and to suffer his judgment to be so tainted by the false colourings of a dream as to call in question his property in his own child, shocked him beyond measure. The resemblance his son bore to Gonsalvo he had himself noticed, and with pleasure noticed, as it served to keep up the remembrance of a much loved, long lost friend and relation : but the Baron's straining that resemblance to a conclusion so wild and extravagant, was a falling off too lamentable not to overwhelm him with grief and astonishment. Unable from those impressions on his feelings to speak, he for some moments continued silent, his face imprinted with the strongest marks of concern—while the Baron's hope, gaining new strength from the pause, cast a visible gleam of satisfaction over his countenance.

My dear Lord, and most valued friend, said he,
after

after some hesitation, to say that your misfortunes affect me as though they were my own, and that there is nothing within the compass of my power which I would not do to redress or relieve you from them, is to speak far short of my feelings and inclinations, and is no more than, I trust, you will readily believe: would to heaven that the remedy were immediately to follow the effort, and sleep should not seal my eyelids ere you found it. In the disappearance of Gonsalvo, my loss is not less, nor did my grief fall short of yours; but, with the extinction of hope, my grief has abated; I have long ceased to think that he lives; some account of him else must surely long since have reached his friends; but as to the mode or cause of his disappearance, I find myself as unable to form even a vague conjecture as you can be. As to the rest, hear my story and be satisfied.

C H A P. VIII.

Don Isidor relates his History.

YOU may remember that, previous to our going against Algeziras, we were entertained at the court of Alphonso, then at Burgos, and treated with uncommon marks of distinction; there was a vast concourse of nobility there, as well those who were going to the war, as their friends and relations, who came to spend as much time as possible with them before their departure, and bid them a final adieu—Don Alvarez de Guzman was at that time the King's chief favourite, and of course the most considerable person present. The pomp and dignity of this great man's family contributed to the splendour of the court, but no part of it so much as his fair niece Donna Isabella de Guzman, who seemed to engross the eyes and admiration of the court, and to eclipse all the young ladies then present; though there were many of the first in estimation both for birth and beauty in the train of the Queen Maria. As Gon-

salvo and I stood in a familiar degree of intimacy with Don Alvarez, I had frequent opportunities of conversing with Donna Isabella, and found that her mind was as highly gifted with wit, and enriched with knowledge, as her person was with beauty—Not to trouble you with a detail of minute circumstances interesting only to the parties concerned; we conceived a reciprocal tenderness for each other, and I obtained her consent to demand her in marriage from her father, and to that end to ask the assistance of Don Alvarez; but as her father was of a very high rank and proud disposition, and I at the time but a soldier of fortune, it was determined that I should wait till my services entitled me to rank, which in the scene we were then going to, was likely soon to happen. We privately plighted our faith to each other, and parted with mutual assurances of eternal and inviolable fidelity.—Soon after we took the field: what happened there, and afterwards at Gibraltar up to the time of your departure, I need not mention; the King, you know, honoured me with knighthood, and on your returning home I resolved to remain with the army returning back to Castile, actuated perhaps by a thirst for glory, but certainly by my passion for the fair Isabella too. And here, my lord, it may be proper to make an

excuse

excuse to you, for a concealment that favours too strongly of insincerity. My duty to you, who was more than a father to me, and the confidence which your friendship intitled you to, demanded a communication of so very important an affair; but the truth is, I was doubtful of success, and too proud to circulate the shame (as I then thought it) of a disappointment if I should fail: let it satisfy you, that I did not communicate it even to Gonsalvo.—But to return whence I have digressed: I thought my newly acquired honours gave me more reasonable pretensions, and made this a fit season to introduce the subject of my passion to Alvarez, not doubting from the strong friendship he expressed for me, and which I thought was sincere, that he would willingly render me all the service he could on the occasion. Whatever his private feelings on my opening the business to him might have been, he affected to take my proposal in good part, but told me that to the King and Queen Dowager Maria I must make my suit, as they had honoured the young lady with their patronage, and had taken to themselves the task of providing for her a suitable alliance.

The duplicity of Alvarez must have been obvious to any one, who was not blinded by excess

excess of passion on one hand, and the security of sincere friendship on the other. I thought he was sincere ; whereas if I had only taken the pains to reflect, I might have seen that he should have taken the office of opening the matter to the King upon himself. However, as I stood tolerably well with Peter, I felt little repugnance to disclose my inclinations to him, which I did the succeeding day in the modestest manner I could, concluding with an account of our reciprocal attachment, and of our engagement to each other, which we had entered into previous to my taking the field.

I was much surprised to see the King knit his brows, and discover manifest marks of displeasure during the latter part of my speech.—When I had done, Don Isidor de Haro, said he, we have been pleased with thy services to our royal father, and have given thee proofs of our approbation—but think no more of this lady as you value our favour—we have already provided her with a suitable match—our royal word is pledged, and cannot be departed from. I ventured to remonstrate, but he was inflexible, and I left his presence in a state, compared with which the ordinary miseries of life were comfort. I sought Alvarez, and he told me that he was from the beginning apprehensive that I should not succeed, for that he had reason to believe

believe the king purposed marrying her into the noble family of Garcias.

With all the dissimulation of a true courtier, Don Alvarez affected to condole with me on my misfortune ; and I left him, nothing relieved by his discourse, though full of gratitude for his friendly sympathy.

The agitation I was thrown into by this mortifying refusal affected me so violently, that I was taken extremely ill of a fever, the cause of which my pride urged me to keep concealed. In this extremity I had nothing to support or relieve me but my dependence on the fidelity of my Isabella, whose soul was far above falsehood or caprice ; and the indefatigable attention of my faithful servant Pierrot ; who, in his grief and care for me, brought himself into a state of health little better than my own. Thus was I nearly reduced to all the horrors of sickness, solitude, and disappointed passion. What, thought I, avail my newly-acquired titles ?—I am a step of honour higher it is true, but all my hopes of happiness are perhaps for ever blasted !—Titles, rank, and all the pride of man, what are you but deceit ?—you mock misery, point the sting of adversity, and hold out the horrors of ruin to our view in tenfold amplification !—In short, I not only forgot my honours,
but

but myself also, and lived for some time almost unconscious of existence.

I was roused from this state of torpid despair by an account that Peter was preparing to arm against our present king, then Count Transmare. The news struck a gleam of light across my mind—love suggested hope, and pride whispered revenge. I had known Henry during the life of Alphonso; we had often conversed and hunted together, and he professed a strong friendship for me, as well as for Gonfalso: you will not wonder then, that the character of Peter, the insult he had already offered, and those which it was probable I might yet receive at his hands, joined to my respect and love for Henry, should of themselves, even exclusive of my passion for the fair Isabella, suggest to me the idea of deserting the service of the tyrant and flying to that of his adversary.—The thought no sooner occurred than my resolution was taken, and I only waited for an opportunity of once more seeing my Isabella, to carry it into execution. This opportunity soon offered. I informed her of the king's resolution—of my determination to retire and wait for a more favourable time to complete our wishes: I conjured her to be firm in rejecting any proposals of marriage from another quarter, and assured her that

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it was my determination to take her from under the tyrant's power or perish in the attempt. She answered, that it was probable that would be effected without my interference, as the Queen Mother, Maria, in whose suite she was, was at the head of the confederacy formed against Peter, and in league with Count Transmare: and, finally, she assured me, that nothing but death, or my own inclination, should keep us from uniting our fates together.—We knelt down together, and with the holy rosary and crucifix clasped in our hands, swore to each other mutual fidelity. That very evening I departed, attended by my faithful Pierrot, whose joy at getting fairly out of Peter's reach, which happened about sun-rise the ensuing morning, burst forth in a train of songs, jests, and observations, so simple, so pleasant, and so natural, that my gloomy reflections were insensibly banished from my heart; and I felt a transport the more exquisite as it was so long a stranger to me.

When I reached Toro, where Henry was assembling his forces, he received me with open arms, expressed an earnest wish that Baron Rayo and Gonfalso would shake off their attachment to the tyrant and join him; but assured me, that as he well knew the refined principle upon which the

Baron

Baron adhered to the reigning monarch, and the rigid honour and integrity which governed his actions—let the event of this contest be what it would, he and his family should be protected. Not to detain you with a recital of events which you know as well as me, the fall of Toledo was the fate of our cause; I escaped out of it by miracle; and, still attended by my faithful Pierrot, bent my course towards Portugal. The extreme fatigue of my body, joined to the anxiety of my mind, brought me again so low, that I was obliged to take up my lodgings at a peasant's cottage on the banks of the river Guadiana: here the genial temperature of the air, the wholesome simple diet, the uninterrupted repose of the cottage and its inhabitants, whose cheerfulness insensibly found its way to my heart, and above all, the exertions of my faithful Pierrot to entertain and serve me, facilitated my recovery, and made a considerable alteration in my spirits. I soon had strength to bathe and to hunt in the woods; and, pleased with the daily increase of my health and strength, remained there till I was perfectly recovered.

It was not without great regret that I quitted this sweet humble abode of innocence, hospitality, and pleasure; after making the cottagers the best return I could for their hospitality, we separated,

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not without emotions of sorrow on all sides. I thought that Pierrot would have broken his heart; and nothing less than his attachment to me could have torn him from them. Ah, your honour, said he, as we travelled along, that is what may be called living—that is a life after God's own heart—there we were neither afraid of crafty undermining rivals, false friends, or cunning courtiers; there we had neither envy, jealousy, fraud, nor dissimulation; there we could lie down in our beds without any apprehension of death but such as the Almighty might be pleased to visit us with—without any fear of being one day pushed into the field of battle, and next day upon the scaffold—there were no tyrants to cut us off—no Peter to rob us of our sweethearts.

This last word roused me from a state of repose in which the unusual calmness of our life at the cottage, and the exhilarating influence of returning vigour had laid me. I relapsed into reflection—I began again to feel all the misery of being thus tyrannically cut off from every thing that could render life supportable to me; I was stung to the quick at the thoughts of Isabella's being put into the hands of a rival; and as strength increased, the vigour of my mind increasing also, I began to examine the grounds of my despondence, and found that much
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of it was owing to a momentary awe, impressed upon me by the furious and known relentless nature of the tyrant Peter, and the consequent depression of my spirits: I began to censure my too easy acquiescence, blushed for the meanness of my conduct, and heartily scorned myself for the abject dereliction of the duty I owed to my own happiness, and to the faith I plighted to my Isabella. All allegiance to Peter was cast off—my fortunes were inseparably connected with those of Transmare, which, though at present clouded, were far from extinguished, the wickedness of Peter himself being a more powerful engine in his favour than all the hosts of France. With this prospect, such as it was, I thought I could be content, could I only get possession of my Isabella. I should have told you, that on the rupture between the Queen Mother and Peter, she retired to her father's house: one difficulty only therefore lay in my way, but that was to all appearance an almost insuperable one; the probability being, that as Peter had crushed the confederacy, her father would not merely refuse his consent, but use every stratagem to deliver me up to the tyrant: I determined, however, to leave no means untried on my part, and to trust the rest to the affection of my Isabella and the direction of Providence.

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Having

Having thus adjusted the matter in my mind, I recrossed the Guadiana, and, disguised in the dress of a common Pisano, turned by the most unfrequented ways back through Spain towards Talavera, at a small distance from which, but where particularly I did not know, her father had his abode. After some days weary travelling, I found myself near Talavera ; and, in order to get proper information, determined to stop at the first cottage I came to. It was not long till one offered of a most inviting appearance ; with the cheerful consent of the people I dismounted from my horse and entered, and found it within clean and well accommodated, beyond any thing I could have hoped for or had ever seen with peasants. After eating a hearty dinner I retired to a small room to repose me, after the fatigues of the journey, and soon fell into a profound sleep. I had not enjoyed it long, when I was awakened by a hand shaking me by the shoulder, rather roughly. Surprised, I looked up, and saw Pierrot hanging over me with a face in which the most whimsical mixture of various expressions was portrayed : joy, however, was the predominant trait, and I was pleased before I had reason to think I had cause to be so. Lord, your honour ! says he, I hope you will pardon my waking you ; but I could not for the life
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of me refrain—O blessed Virgin! Can you think it—the strangest, luckiest, oddest affair!—What! exclaimed I—prithee say what it is? Oh, your honour! I am half dead with joy, for to be sure nobody could have expected it—Did not I tell your honour how I dreamed last night that the horse you rode was all on fire under you, and yet never consumed or burned? and did not I tell you that it was a blessed dream, and that luck would come of it? And did not I tell you—What—indefatigable babbler! what is it you would tell me? Well, well, say what you will, dreams come out as true as the gospel of St. John of God. For Heaven's sake, Pierrot, have you a mind to rack my brain to pieces with suspense, and make it as wild as your own? Tell me quickly what you mean, or by Heaven!—Well, to be sure, if I thought your worship would be angry, my throat should have burst with the story or e'er I should have disturbed you: God knows, I thought that you would have flown through the roof of the house, like a spark of fire up a chimney, at the very mention of it. Hear me, Pierrot, said I hastily—If you have aught that concerns my peace, which, by the wildness of your looks, and the incoherence of your words, I am inclined to believe, let me have it in three words, or here

I abjure you. Three words, indeed—three words ! rejoined Pierrot, Lord of Heaven help you—it is worth three thousand words ! But what are words ? —Three thousand pieces of gold—three thousand rubies and emeralds would be too cheap a purchase for such good—such delightful——Begone ! said I, in a rage—Fly ! before I am tempted to commit some rash action and annihilate you on the spot—brute—ass—barbarian ! Here I rose up in the bed, and, lifting up a chair, was going to let it fly at him, when he walked away, muttering to himself, and, getting outside the door, and half thrusting in his head, with a look of arch reproach, he said—You are too angry then to hear news of my Lady Isabella ? Gracious God ! exclaimed I, leaping from my bed—Lady Isabella ! Say again—Where ? How ? In what way ? Tell me—tell me all. Aha ! said he triumphantly, eod I thought your honour was not quite awake at first, or you would not have made such a difficulty of hearing my story. You must know, then, that in this very house, this that we now are in, and in that very bed in which you just now lay, and by that clean, orderly, neat, good-looking old body of a woman, that you saw sitting in the wicker chair (well, happy was her lot, and she says so herself)—’Sdeath ! What of her ? There now again—you cannot

cannot have patience, and I telling you in as few words as possible—by her then was your noble, dear, charming Lady Isabella nursed. Mother of Mercy, is it possible!—Possible! Is my name Pierrot?—As sure then as it is my name, so true is what I say: nay, this very morning did she bless this cottage with her presence; and, to-morrow morning will come again; nay, if good luck befall, she may be here perhaps this evening, for it is yet far from night, and she sometimes comes after dinner.

In a fit of rapture, I threw my arms round my faithful Pierrot, whose joy was nearly as great as my own, and who, while I was dressing myself, told me, in his disjointed consequential manner, at which I should on another occasion have laughed, that the nurse mentioning her young lady's name, and he asking her, if she ever heard of mine, declared, that I had been almost the only subject of conversation between them for some time; and that she spoke of me as of a person already her husband.

This account made me think that I should run no hazard in informing the old woman who I was: I called her therefore into the room, and told her—she wept for joy, and declared it was the happiest event she had for a long time known,

as she was sure it would render her child (so she called my Isabella) completely blest. She had not long retired, when we heard the outer door open, and a person enter—a confused, indistinct buzzing of female voices succeeded, and continued for some minutes; at length I heard a well-known voice—a voice more ravishing to my ears than seraphs' songs. Is it possible! gracious God, is it possible! Is my Isidor in this house?—Unable to contain myself, I burst from the room and caught her in my arms—Yes, my love, my faithful, my adored Isabella, your Isidor is here; and this blessed, joyful interview is more than recompensed for ages of affliction. Oh my Isabella, didst thou but know what pangs, what sufferings mine have been!

Here I was interrupted by the old woman with, I do not know, young Señor, what your sufferings may have been, but many and many a tear has my young lady here, in this very spot, shed over your name; and even I, who did not know you, was fain to keep her company—she did so take on—But, Lord, Sir! I hope you will go fighting no more—fighting is a woundy mischievous, unchristianlike thing, and no luck can come of it; and then my lady trembles so at the very thoughts of it, that I wonder how you could have the heart to set about it.

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The old woman's gabble was a very seasonable relief to Isabella, who had sunk into my arms in a soft, speechless delirium of joy and surprise.—As soon as cool reflection resumed its seat, I told her every thing that occurred, as I have already told it to you, and desired her advice upon the steps necessary to be taken to insure our happiness. The division between Queen Maria and her son Peter, she said, had not altered the intention of the latter: and she candidly confessed, that she had received her father's positive commands to entertain Garcias as her husband: that she was convinced all attempts to alter his resolution would be vain, and that my discovering myself would certainly be attended with utter ruin. Under those circumstances, she said she was at a loss what to advise—but knowing my honour, and convinced of my sincerity and affection, was willing to adopt any measure that I should prescribe to her.

We now called the old nurse into consultation, and after some deliberation it was agreed, that we should be married the next morning at the cottage, and that the ensuing night she should leave her father's unobserved and join me at the cottage, whence we should immediately depart, and take shelter in Arragon, till I could get intelli-

gence where Count Transamare had disposed of himself.

— Early next morning the old woman dispatched her husband to a neighbouring village for a priest, who lived there, to prevail on him to come to the cottage and perform the ceremony; and, in the mean time, sent away a young lad, her son, to the town of Talavera, under pretence of getting medicines for her guest, who feigned sickness for the purpose, in order that he should be no interruption, nor suspect what was going forward. The old man being properly qualified to apply to the feelings of the priest, that is to say, having a purse well stocked with money, readily obtained his consent, and they both were betimes in the cottage to breakfast. Nothing was wanting now but the bride: with eager eyes I traced the path she was to come—I grew uneasy—then impatient—at last my heart sunk into despair.—At length she appeared—Oh my Isabella! said I, in a tone of tender reproach, my heart was dying within me—the day was so far advanced, I began to fear you were detained. Thou dear impatient, said she, dost thou know that it is not yet eight o'clock? Such are the thorny feelings, such the hopes and fears of true love. But why do I trouble you with a foolish detail of useless uninteresting trifles?

Oh,

Oh, proceed with it, said the Baron—be minute, be particular—the most refined intellectual sensation, the most exquisite delight, is that which arises from a nice investigation of the virtuous passions. Always an admirer of beauty—always the friend of love—age has not diminished my admiration of the one, nor my esteem for the other; and I declare, that no part of your story has afforded me so much pleasure as the description of your passion and fondnesses with your amiable Isabella.

Ah, Baron! returned Don Isidor, amiable indeed! had you but known her—had that bliss but been reserved for me, to see you clasp her in your fond parental arms, and bestow your blessing.

Hold, Isidor, interrupted the Baron—Have I not griefs enough already? Would'st thou that this too was added to the load? Alas! I fear, nay I feel, that I shall but too much deplore her loss upon the strength of thy description; to lose her, when known, might have been too much:—but go on, my child! I interrupt you.

To proceed, we were married in presence of the old couple, their daughter, who attended on Isabella, and my honest Pierrot; who, perhaps, in excess of joy fell not short of ourselves: he mused,

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he capered, he cried and laughed alternately; and when the knot was tied, his reason overcome by the overflowing of his heart, he dropped on his knees at Isabella's feet, and, snatching her hand, kissed it as if he would devour it—wept till he wetted it—and called her his master's saviour!

The priest gave me a proper certificate of our marriage, and departed, after having given us the most solemn assurances of secrecy. Isabella returned to her father's house, and I retired to my room in a state of delicious transport that I was before a stranger to. I spent the rest of the day in framing plans of future happiness for myself and my Isabella.

Impatiently did I wish for night—it at length came, and in due time brought my treasure to my arms.—We set out without loss of time; Isabella mounted on my horse, while I rode on that of Pierrot, and he and Ines, my wife's attendant, on a mule purchased of the old man for the purpose.

I thought it most advisable to take the shortest road possible out of Peter's dominions, and therefore struck into one that led to the kingdom of Arragon: we arrived without any material accident at the city of Saragossa, where a rumour was in circulation, that there was immediately expected a rupture between the kingdoms of Castile
and

and Arragon. I directly dispatched an account of this to the Count Transmare, then taking refuge at the court of France, in order that he might turn the rupture to the most advantageous account his policy might suggest to him. It was not long after that Henry himself appeared at Saragossa, entered into a league with the King of Arragon, and took the field once more against Peter. The prudence and valour of Henry gave victory to the Arragonian troops wherever he led them. I was seldom from his side, and can say that no man ever deserved good fortune better; for, as none shewed greater power in winning her over, so none ever made a better use of her when won. The war was very successful; however, the King of Arragon thought proper to patch up a peace with Peter, and Henry conceiving it prudent not to confide too far in him, returned again to Paris, attended by his wife Joanna, who had been rescued from the tyrant's hands, and by me and my Isabella.

While we were in Arragon my wife was delivered of a son—that same boy whom you honour with your regard—Henry was his godfather, and with my consent named him Alphonso in honour of the King his father's memory. His mother being extremely ill and weak after her lying-in, it

was

was thought expedient to put the child out to nurse ; and as we were to go into France, and it was necessary to leave the child behind, we dispatched Pierrot to Isabella's old nurse at Talavera, to procure one she could depend on there in order to be under her eye. The child accordingly was given to the woman sent by her with Pierrot, and who went back attended again by him, furnished with a sufficient sum for three years expences to be delivered to the old woman for disbursement.

The anguish at parting with this dear first pledge of our loves was unutterable ; my wife's particularly was so extreme that she could scarcely support it, and she proceeded to Paris with a heart foreboding an eternal separation from her child.

Of the various fortunes of Count Transamare, in his struggling for the throne with Peter, as you must already know them, I need not inform you, more particularly as it would break in upon the thread of my story ; suffice it to say, I was with him in all, and even when domestic sorrow made me unfit for the world I attended him.

The sun of my bridal rose with brightness, but was, alas ! eclipsed in its meridian—My wife had two children in the three years following the birth

of Alphonso, who both died infants : in the fifth year she again proved pregnant—fatally pregnant—in due time she had a daughter who closed the scene, for in nine days after its birth I lost my comfort, my peace, my all, in Isabella—she died and left me the most miserable of all created beings. Yes, yes! all joy vanished with my Isabella!—Here Don Isidor stopped, hastily arose from his seat, and retired. The good old Baron, who saw and participated in his affliction, patiently sat with brim-full eyes in expectation of his return. At length Don Isidor came back—took his seat—gave the Baron a squeeze by the hand, with a look soliciting pity, and endeavoured to proceed—The Baron purposely interrupted him, Did you hear nothing of your wife's father all this time, and did Don Alvarez take no steps to mediate between you and his brother?—I should have told you in its proper place, that my wife opened to me the whole artifice and duplicity of Alvarez : it was at his instigation that the King resolved to marry her to Garcias, and she incurred his resentment by her resistance.

When Isabella was brought to bed of her first child, I wrote to her father to inform him of the event, beseeching his blessing for his daughter and her child ; he sent me a reply gross and rude to
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the last degree, disclaiming all connection with his daughter, and threatening me with the utmost vengeance of the King. I despised the threat as much as I contemned the man, and contented myself with having done my duty to him.

Mean time I failed not in my enquiries about you and Gonsalvo, the recollection of whom constantly overcast even my happiest moments, as the frequent passing clouds preparatory to a storm darken the fair face of day. From the strange variety of contradictory accounts I received of you both, I had nothing left to conclude, but that you had both fallen victims to the rage or jealousy of the tyrant; and I never could get rid of a goading reflection, that by possibility I might by my desertion have excited the monster's jealousy and contributed to your ruin.

As I had proved myself the zealous adherent and faithful servant of Henry, so he proved the most noble and generous of masters to me. When by killing the tyrant he got possession of the throne, one of his first acts was to bestow this estate upon me. He solicited me earnestly to remain about his person; but on my declaring to him the state of my mind, and that othing but the duty I felt to attend him in his dangers could have so long kept me from my so much desired retirement,

retirement, he gave up the point, and honoured me by saying, How few, Don Isidor, are found like you, ready to share in a monarch's dangers, and unwilling to participate of the splendours of his court! Go, then, you know my power, be not distrustful of my inclination—your services exceed the one, but not the other—tax both to the utmost, and you shall not be disappointed: one promise only I exact from you, namely, that I see you once a year at least.

He has ever since continued to load me with favours, and designs to provide amply for his son, for so he calls Alphonso. I was performing my promise of an annual visit when you first arrived here; and I still find him the same generous friend, the same gracious and beneficent prince. One of his chief favourites is married to an aunt of my wife, the sister of her father; she affects friendship, but I can see that he and she abhor me, as they conceive me to stand between them and the inheritance of Don Pedro Guzman, my father-in-law's estate: but it is no matter—I know the king, and have no other feeling for them and their hatred than contempt.

Since I came here my chief prop has been my son Alphonso; his instruction has engrossed my whole care; my daughter being with the Marchioness

chionefs del Oro in Lisbon, who insisted on taking her to herself. I must confess, that the growing perfections of my son, every day disclosing some new beauty, beguile me of a portion of my sorrows. The clouds of misery that so entirely obscured my happiness begin to disperse, and the presence and conversation of you, my dear revered patron and father (seizing the Baron by the hand), will help to clear the whole hemisphere before me, and give the setting of my life that brightness which your counsel and protection afforded to its rising.

One thing now on the expressions which have fallen from you about my son. When I consider the strong resemblance he bears to Gonsalvo, which I have often with pleasure noted, and which, considering their close consanguinity, is not so very surprising, coupled with the circumstance of his bearing the name of Alphonso, which you say was that of Gonsalvo's son—I cannot so much wonder at your emotions: Nevertheless one thing has struck me with astonishment, that a soul so vigorous as yours, a mind fraught with all knowledge, and endued with so much wisdom, could yield to the suggestions of a dream—a creature of the fancy—a mere being of the imagination:—to act by the monitions of such illusive shadows, is to act against reason and against nature.

Nature

Nature, my dear Isidor, returned the Baron; cannot give us a reason for all things, as most sceptics expect it should: that phenomenon, the marking of the fœtus by external objects, and even by the workings of the imagination, is as much beyond the reach of human reason, as the monitions of a dream or the appearance of departed spirits: the difference is, that the experience of almost all is in favour of the one, that of few in favour of the other. If, then, we be so ignorant of things immediately subject to our senses, what must we be in those of the soul abstracted from them?

Don Isidor shook his head, but said nothing—Dinner was served in—the happy Alphonso could hardly eat with the delight the Baron's company afforded him; such charms has cheerful accommodating old age for the tender heart of youth.

It was that day determined, that Don Isidor should proceed to court, to get the attainder taken off the Baron; and that, till that was effected, he should remain undiscovered.

C H A P. V.

WHEN Alphonso withdrew after dinner, he was accosted by Pierrot with, Don Alphonso—accompanied by a significant wink and beck of his hand, as who should say, Follow me—I have something to communicate to you. Alphonso followed—Pierrot led him through the yard—then looking about to see if the place was sufficiently secure from observation, he led him into the garden; thence again, with the same precaution, into the vineyard, and thence into the field of exercise; then leading him into the very middle, as remote as possible from any place of concealment where listeners might stand, lest possibly some person might be there to hear what he was about to say—taking Alphonso by a button, and staring full in his face, with a look of infinite sagacity and importance, he said in a whispering voice, Don Alphonso, do you know this old harper in the great hall? How should I know, Pierrot? said Alphonso. Does my master, Don Isidor, know him? —Alphonso, unwilling to break the secrecy imposed upon

upon him by his father, yet averse to telling a direct falsehood, replied, How should my father know him, since he has not seen him many hours? I will tell you what it is, master—but to be sure it may be a silly thing I am going to say—No matter, returned the youth, say it, whatever it may be. Well, then, to be sure, I may be wrong—but my mind misgives me strangely.—What would you say? Don't fear—I shall never mention it, speak out. As I hope for mercy, the sight of the old harper made my hair stand on end; nay, the thought of him now makes my blood run in my body, and I wish he was well away from the house. Why, what dost thou mean? said Alphonso. I mean that—but—well I don't know how to say it. Say it, be what it may, returned Alphonso. Well, your honour has often heard Don Isidor talk of the Baron de Rayo—he was a good man to be sure, but that is no matter—I don't like to have any thing to do with the dead! Well, you must know that this Baron within—I—I mean he that's like him—he, I say, was in the tower of Siguenca for high treason—put there by that villain Peter; and there he died, or, as some say, was put to death, by the orders of that devil in grain, whom Christ pardon!—Don Isidor took on so about him, and used to sigh and

groan for him; and no wonder, for he was a father to him. Well, what do you think?—but—but—but—I know you will laugh at me. Indeed, Pierrot, I will not, let it be what it will I shall not laugh at you. Look you, Don Alphonso, said he, clapping one hand on the top of his head, and the other under his chin, is this head I hold in my hands, mine or not? Certainly it is, Pierrot. Then, as sure as it is, the old harper in the hall is the ghost of the Baron Rayo, who died in the tower of Siguenca—it is at least his fetch! Body o’ me! I knew him all the time he was at dinner, in spite of all his care to hide himself; and I trembled and shook like an aspen leaf, for he spoke in the same grand way he was wont to do at Montalto castle. Lord! your honour’s father, who does not fear the devil himself (St. John be our guard!) was as much afraid of the Baron as a mouse of a cat—he was so grand; and it surprises me that Don Isidor does not know him, for all his coarse great coat, leathern belt, and long beard; but to be sure he is blinded by some charm. For my part, I know not what to do—I am afraid to tell Don Isidor, and I am afraid to let him remain unknown in the house, for God and his Holiness the Pope alone can tell what his designs may be—and though he was dearly fond
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of master, when alive, who knows how the other world may turn his heart!

Pierrot, said Alphonso, keep this secret entirely to yourself; on no any account, let it go further: I will go in and take proper means to find all out, and let you know—mean time, be secret, I charge you.

Never fear, your honour: the world should not prevail on me to speak a word about it contrary to your orders; but, for the blessed Virgin's sake let Don Isidor know soon, for I fear there is some ruination in the old Baron's coming about the house.

Alphonso immediately flew into Don Isidor's closet, to disclose to him and the Baron the conversation between him and Pierrot; and in order to make them more cheerful, he told them the whole as it passed, but in a manner so pleasant and humorous, that they both, for the first time, relaxed into mirth, and gave way to a violent fit of laughter.

The Baron recollected the name of Pierrot, when Don Isidor mentioned him in his story; but as he was since advanced into years, he did not notice him when attending at dinner. It was agreed however to undeceive him with regard to the Baron's death—to let him know the truth, and

bind him down to secrecy. For this purpose he was called into the closet: as soon as he entered, the Baron advanced towards him, and with a deep and tremendous tone said to him, Friend, this youth informs me—Here Pierrot stood transfixed with horror—his face pale, his nostrils dilated, his eyebrows raised, and every other mark of a violent agony of fear upon him.—With much difficulty the Baron preserved gravity enough to proceed—Dost thou know ought of me?—Speak. Ye—ye—yes.—That is, N—n—no.—Speak, and fear not. Ah, Don Alphonso! said Pierrot, with a tremulous voice, I did not think you would—Speak! said the Baron again, with a voice that shook the room. Yes, yes, your honour, said Pierrot, hastily—I did say to Don Alphonso, as how I thought that your worship was—was—something—that is a little like the deceased worthy Baron de Rayo.—Here the Baron took his hand, which he, his mouth yawning wide with excess of horror, endeavoured to withdraw, and pressing it gently, said, And why not the Baron himself, Pierrot? Has age and this coat so entirely disguised me that you thought me only a little like Baron de Rayo? Your honour, then, said Pierrot, brightening, is not dead? Certainly not, said the Baron. Don Alphonso! said Pierrot,
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did not I tell you a month ago, that there was to be luck in the way; and that I dreamed of a coffin flying, with black wings, over a gallows—a sure sign, as your worship knows, of good. But you are not dead? No, indeed, said the Baron laughing. Then, said Pierrot, dropping on his knees, may God keep you so! It is true, I told Don Alphonso, that your fetch was here, but then I thought your honour was dead—and so—and so your worship knows that if you were dead, you could not be here alive—and so I was not so much to blame: but troth, your honour, I was hugely frightened; although I am sure, though I say it, I would not turn my back upon e'er a he in the kingdom, excepting your honour, in fair living fight—but for the dead, I always abhorred to have any thing to do with them. Well, then, said Don Isidor, you now know the Baron to be living, and have no further cause for fear; so make it your business to see that he is properly attended, and served with the respect suitable to his dignity. But, mark me; let not, on thy peril, a single tittle of this discovery transpire.

I shall carefully obey your honour, said Pierrot.

It is very true, said Don Isidor as Pierrot re-

tired, a braver fellow, when opposed to men, never existed; but he is superstitious to an excess: often has he pestered, indeed oftner diverted me with his dreams; but the very mentioning of the dead seems to scare him. This is an unaccountable phenomenon in the human heart.

Not at all, returned the Baron; he fears not men, because his senses are competent to judge of the danger, and apportion the power of resistance to it; in which case a boldness of nature gives him confidence, and makes him estimate his own prowess at the highest: but, in the case of spirits, his soul instinctively confesses the existence of such beings, from false conception, or early habit; attributes to them mischievous dispositions; while, being out of the compass of his sense, he cannot estimate their power, and therefore fears them. Thus, however contradictory it may appear to you, it appears perfectly intelligible and natural to me.

Next morning Alphonso, passing at an early hour through the armoury, perceived Pierrot hard at work: he had taken down the armour, and was cleaning them with all imaginable industry.

What is all this for, Pierrot? said Alphonso—
by whose directions is it that you take so much
trouble?

trouble? Pierrot looking up in his face, with a countenance full of sagacity and self-importance, said, We shall have rare doings, now that the Baron de Rayo is here—he will be for tilting with you, as he was wont with Don Isidor and young Henrico Gonfalso: but tell me, Señor, does the Baron give any account of that sweet young gentleman? Oh, he was the flower of the country! the cleverest, the handsomest—why, he was almost as big as the Baron.—Often, often, when I look at you, I think of him, for you are the picture of him; and so Don Isidor says. Ah! Lord help us—where is he now—have you heard, Señor?

No, Pierrot, I have not; not a word. But why this armour?—

Why there would be Don Henrico, and your father, just when about your age, nay before that, tilting, and lancing, and mock-fighting, perpetually at it, and the Baron looking on and instructing them: and now you shall see—I will wager my head against a truss of hay, that before to-morrow night you will see this armour employed; nay the old Baron himself will be at it; but here is no armour to fit him. Alack, Pierrot, he is old. Lord bless your honour, you little know what tough stuff the old codger is made of; I'll suffer

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our cook to cut off my middle finger and make a patty of it, if I would not rather face any three men in our parish than him, old as he is; only make him angry——why it was he that made Don Isidor what he was, and sure enough it was like master like scholar between them, for your father would fight the devil himself: there, at Algeziras, he cut his way through a hundred Moors, and brought intelligence to the king that saved our whole army from being cut off by the Infidels—the king made a knight of him for it. I can't tell you the particulars of it; for if ever I talked of it as we rode together, he would stop me, and blush as if he was ashamed of it.

Well, Pierrot, interrupted Alphonso, I should not like to hurt any one, but methinks war must be glorious sport—so grand—trumpets sounding—horses neighing—arms clashing—the king applauding.—Oh God! Oh God! it must be delightful!—Where did you collect all those ideas, my dear, dear boy, said the Baron, appearing suddenly, for surely you speak as feelingly, and as pertinently too, as if you had been already engaged. I have read of them, Sir, returned Alphonso, and I think I should like to try them.—And try them thou shalt, my love, said the Baron, embracing him.

I wish

I wish the Baron may not have overheard me, thought Pierrot to himself, recollecting his expression of, Old Codger.

Should you like me for a master, my dear? said the Baron.

Indeed I should, Sir; but I wish you a better office. It would ill suit you to bestow your time on a boy like me.

My dear, rejoined the Baron, your father has consigned you entirely to my care, and in doing so, has conferred on me the greatest possible favour. All my life used to arms, they will, in old age, be my best pastime; and perhaps it may not be unpleasant to you to hear, that he who was your father's instructor in arms will be yours. This day then we begin; and, with so promising a pupil, I have no doubt of doing every thing.

That I will warrant you, old fellow, said Pierrot, as the Baron and Alphonso retired; if fighting will do, you will give him enough of it.—By St. John of God! I believe the Baron thinks that the Almighty made man for no other purpose but fighting.—God have mercy on his old soul! I am sure it is time for him to think of something else—but I verily believe those fighting people think they are never to die, or that they have no
foul

soul to be saved—With which words Pierrot retired from the armoury, marking his forehead with a thousand crosses, and muttering as many pious ejaculations to the Virgin Mary.

In a few weeks after, Don Isidor, according to a plan laid by him, the Baron and Father Thomas, set off to court, got the attainder of the Baron reversed, and had special messengers sent all over the kingdom, with letters from the gentry at court, and orders from the king to the magistrates of the different towns, to search for Gonsalvo, his wife, and his child : by the king's desire too, the Archbishop of Toledo sent dispatches to all the heads of the church throughout the country to the same effect. Thus the Baron was able again to reassume his proper appearance ; and had the consolation to think that if his children were living there was a great probability of their being found, and to conceive a lively hope that he should yet press his grandson to his bosom.

C H A P. VI.

THE Baron was surprised to find that his pupil had already acquired a considerable share of skill in the science of defence, and that he was an excellent horseman. His bulk and strength too were prodigious considering his age, and the Baron had reason to believe that he would one day ride foremost in the ring of heroes. In a few months Don Isidor was prevailed upon to case himself in armour, and enter the lists in mock fight with his son: Alphonso rapidly gained ground, and, before the end of the second year, Don Isidor pronounced him to the Baron to be more than his equal in the encounter. His stature had enlarged to a size far above his father's; the puerile softness of his face began to harden into the firm features of manhood—the rude bulk of his limbs to form into the most perfect symmetry, and the tender treble of his voice to increase into a strong manly tenor—The heart of Don Isidor expanded with joy, and raised him almost above mortality; while the pride and exultation of

the Baron sparkled in his eyes, and gave new vigour and vivacity to his actions—If, said he pleasantly one day to Don Isidor, if I continue to grow young apace, as I have done since I came to your castle, I shall be just of a proper age to go forth as Alphonso's squire at the time that he will be fit to enter upon the world.

The sharpest afflictions find a period at last, either in death or habit—Thus it was with those of the Baron, who, though the messengers returned without being able to get the slightest trace of intelligence of his children, began to grow less wretched than he was: he found in Alphonso something on which to bestow his affection and employ his time, and the impression of his woes began to be insensibly effaced from his heart.

The time when Alphonso should make his appearance on the theatre of life was approaching fast; and as the first step was of the utmost importance, the Baron, Don Isidor, and Father Thomas held frequent conferences on the subject; but all their first plans were rendered abortive, and Don Isidor's happiness interrupted by an event as lamentable as it was unexpected. King Henry was suddenly cut off by poison, administered by the intrigues and jealousy of the Moorish king of Granada.

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On the accession of John the son of Henry to the throne, Don Isidor went to pay him homage, was received as the friend of his father with distinction, and found the loss he sustained in the late king's death in some measure supplied by the young king's choice of a minister and favourite, who was Don Juan de Padilla, a most particular and hearty friend of his. He therefore returned home more assured than he expected, and determined to send Alphonso to court, recommended to Don Juan, as soon as possible, in order that he might be among the first who offered themselves as candidates for the favour of the young monarch. He accordingly set out with all the appointments suitable to his views, attended by the trusty Pierrot. On his arrival at Burgos, he delivered a letter from his father to Don Juan, who received him with marks of affection and esteem, assured him of his patronage and protection, and told him that he would take a proper opportunity to present him to the king.

Don Juan was as good as his word. Sending one morning for Alphonso to come to him, he said, "The king has at my request permitted me to present you to him, and has appointed this day for the purpose: he is young, of a charming temper, and most excellent disposition; he is already pre-
possessed

possessed in your favour by gratitude for your father's services to the late king, you will find little difficulty therefore in making yourself agreeable to him."—They went accordingly to the royal chamber, and were admitted to the young monarch; who, after a long conversation with Alphonso, and after having attentively examined his external deportment as well as his understanding, turned to Don Juan and said, "Don Juan de Padilla, of all the young cavaliers whom you have hitherto introduced to me, this is he who fills up in my mind the most perfect idea of the true gallant cavalier; his person is superior to any I have seen, and his conversation is a happy mixture of vivacity and good sense. Let him be near our person as much as is consistent with his honour and convenience.

The early part of John's reign afforded the young Alphonso ample occasion to display his military talents:—in various encounters with the forces of Portugal, he carried victory along with him in almost every engagement. And on the desertion of one of John's chief confidential officers, whose intelligence and knowledge of the Castilian army's situation might have given a decided advantage to the enemy, he pursued him to the hostile army, broke through a large body
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of them who surrounded the fugitive, seized him, and bore him through them triumphantly on his saddle, back to the Castilian camp: when this prodigy of valour and prowess was announced to the king, he expressed his satisfaction in the most lively terms, and seemed to triumph not a little in his foresight and penetration, in having at once discovered in Alphonso that superior heroism of which he had just given so striking a specimen.

Peace being again restored, Alphonso became the constant companion of the king, from whom he received many flattering marks of favour, and, among others, knighthood.

Among those youths of rank who kept about his person, and laid claim to his favour, was Don Rodrigo de Calvados, the son of a deceased nobleman, a favourite of the late king and of Donna Maria de Guzman, sister to Don Pedro Guzman, Don Isidor's father-in-law. By the address and intriguing disposition of his mother, he had been kept about the court since his father's death—He was in his nature subtle, pliant, fawning, and plausible; with those qualities he had contrived to engross much of the king's friendship to himself, till Alphonso stepped in, and almost without an effort engaged a share of it. Stung to the quick at the progress Alphonso made in the king's affections, and

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burning with envy of his superior accomplishments, he conceived the most implacable hatred against him, and wished for nothing so much as the destruction of his new rival: his chagrin became visible; his mother questioned him upon it, and he hesitated not to tell her the cause. The ambitious spirit of the lady could ill brook even a partial suspension of her views in favour of her son; her soul was up in arms, and her jealousy was as great of Alphonso's rising favour at court, as at the prospect he had of inheriting the estate of his grandfather and her brother Don Pedro Guzman.—The prowess of the youth made an open quarrel too dangerous an experiment; and surrounded as they were with crowds of spies, a plan of treachery was likely to be attended with equal danger, while his irreproachable conduct left nothing on which malice itself could ground an accusation.—Thus puzzled, they knew not what to do, though they agreed that something must be done.

It was a custom with the king to make parties of hunting, in which the ladies and gentlemen of the court attended him; on such occasions they generally entered a great way into the depths of the forests, where game was most plenty, and there pitched tents for their accommodation. As

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it was now the season, the king ordered preparations to be made, invited a number of the gentry to attend him, and among the rest Alphonso, Don Rodrigo and his mother. On the first day of hunting a large boar was started, which the king pursued, and overtaking, was furiously assaulted by the animal; by some mismanagement of his horse the king's spear missed the boar, who turning short, with a rip of his tusk gored the horse, which fell; and the boar was just repeating the blow at the king when Alphonso stepped in between them, but in such a hurry that, instead of piercing him through the breast, he only opened a slanting wound in his neck, which rendered him more furious. The king mean-time had disengaged himself: Alphonso, by a sudden and extraordinary spring, got from the boar before he could make another effort, and meeting him with his spear killed him on the spot. All this time Don Rodrigo stood at a cautious distance, complimenting the king on his fortunate escape. As soon as the company came up every mouth was open at once, congratulating his majesty on the fortunate issue of the affair, who on his part took Alphonso by the hand, and addressing the company said, If my escape be an event from which you have derived any satisfaction, join me in gratitude to him whose gal-

lantly has, under God, effected it.—Alphonso was so overwhelmed with the compliments which were lavished upon him by all the company, that he could scarcely bear it: the goodness of his monarch was a weight too great. With difficulty he answered, If hazarding so worthless a thing as the life of Alphonso, to save that on which the glory and happiness of a nation depend, lays any claim to merit, I am overpaid by the success of the attempt: do not then heap on me a weight I cannot support, by thanking me for doing that which was my duty. God forbid, said the king, that we should set so little value on the services you have rendered us, as your modesty would have us do! No, Alphonso, the gratitude of a king would be but poorly shewn by mere professions—your services shall neither be unrewarded nor forgotten.

Although Rodrigo and his mother were among the loudest in complimenting the youth, the new progress he had made by his heroism, in the heart of the king, was like poison to their entrails—but when the ladies all expressed their admiration of his courage, beauty, vigour, and person, and above all the modest dignity with which he received their praises, the malignant pair could scarcely restrain themselves; nor could Alphonso, had

Had he known of their evil intentions, have wished them a greater curse than the company of their own feelings.

What is there which a wicked woman will not do? The aversion of Donna Maria de Calvados, which, but for this late triumph, might have remained smothered, now blazed with ten-fold fury: she riveted her eyes on him, and secretly wished that they had the power of those of the basilisk, that she might look him dead. As she looked at him, she thought she beheld features that she had once been acquainted with.

This worthy lady had, previous to her marriage with Don Rodrigo's father, seen and conceived a tenderness for Gonsalvo, when he was first brought to court: nay, she had made overtures to him, of which his attachment to the daughter of the Baron de Rayo would not permit him to take advantage. It is no wonder then if the resemblance which Alphonso de Haro bore to that Gonsalvo should be soon recognised. She was astonished at it; she thought it beyond the usual course of nature; and measuring her belief by her wishes rather than by the facts, she set it down that he was really his son, and upon that suggestion, idle though it was, formed a plan, which she determined to put in immediate execution. She

informed her son of her suspicions, on which she said that she was resolved to act as if on certainty, and charged him to co-operate with her in informing the king. To this Rodrigo objected, that his doing so might raise suspicions in the mind of John, for that he was so attached to Alphonso, nothing less than positive evidence could shake him in his favour.

The mother aware of this circumstance, as well as her son, now thought that an anonymous letter would be the best and safest way to try the temper of the king on the business. They sat down together therefore and produced the following letter, which Rodrigo contrived to have dropped in the king's private closet.

"Most gracious sovereign,

"When treason lurks in any shape about your majesty's throne, it is the duty of every subject to apprize you of the danger.

"A son of that traitor to the crown of Castile, the fugitive Henrico Gonsalvo, is now, under the false name of De Haro, near your sacred person: the old viper has eluded justice—crush the young one ere it sting you."

As soon as the king received this letter, his esteem for Alphonso directly suggested to him the truth, that it was the work of some envious enemy;

enemy; he therefore sent for Don Juan de Padilla, and, first shewing him the letter, told him his sentiments of it.

Were not this artifice, said Don Juan, too shallow for the genius of Donna Maria de Calvados, I should suspect her of being at the head of it; her whole life has been one continued scene of court intrigue, and she is most likely to be jealous of the favours you lavish on this young man in preference to her son, without considering the great difference in their talents and qualifications. As it is only justice to the youth, however, that the mask should be torn from the face of his enemies, I shall take the liberty of suggesting to your majesty a mode that cannot fail of discovering them.

The young king, highly pleased, said he would join in it most willingly, and desired him to propose it.

Order Alphonso to withdraw from court, said Don Juan.

Order Alphonso to depart from court! interrupted the king.

May it please your majesty to hear me—The intrigues of your majesty's enemies in the court of Portugal require observation, and we have already

agreed to retain some noble and faithful Castilians privately in your service there : let Alphonso, under a feigned name, proceed thither among the rest, while I make it known that he is dismissed in consequence of this private admonition.

And what end will this answer ? demanded the king, who did not relish the parting with Alphonso.

Your majesty shall know, returned Don Juan. When he is gone, your majesty may express a desire to know to whose fidelity and good offices you are indebted for the admonitory letter, and doubt not but that, eager for personal approbation, they will disclose themselves.

The king immediately fell in with the plan of Don Juan, who sent for Alphonso, told him the affair exactly as it was, opened to him the plan, and concluded with telling him that it offered an opportunity of seeing Lisbon, which would not only amuse him, but contribute to his information and improvement.

Alphonso appearing much concerned, Don Juan earnestly enquired if the plan was disagreeable to him.

Oh, no, no, Señor ! replied Alphonso ; but I am stung to the soul to think that I should have de-
ported

ported myself so as to make an enemy : but, alas ! this is but a small concern ; the thought of giving trouble to my sovereign afflicts me most : what am I, that so good, so great, so august a monarch should throw away a thought upon me ? and what but injury can it be to me to discover who my enemies are, since I must necessarily revenge myself or despise them ?

Noble youth, said Don Juan, you are irresistible—yours are the sentiments of true nobility ; I almost wish I could indulge you : but the king has made the affair his own, and will not be contradicted.

Little preparation was necessary for Alphonso : the king sent for him, took him into his closet, shewed him the letter, assured him of his eternal friendship, and told him that he expected his return as soon as he should signify his desire for it ; which would happen when a proper discovery took place, or when it was despaired of.—Alphonso threw himself at the king's feet, kissed his hand, and bathed it with tears of gratitude : May no disloyalty or disaffection, but such as mine, said he, ever approach your sacred throne ! The king then presenting him a paper to be delivered to Don Juan, and putting a costly ring upon his finger, bid him adieu.

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He waited on Don Juan immediately; who reading the paper, told him that it was an order to pay him two thousand piaftres for the expences of his journey.

That night Alphonfo, attended by Pierrot and two guides, fet out for Portugal; and the next day it was whifpered that the king had difmiffed him in difgrace. From the firft town he went he wrote a letter to his father, and another to the Baron, informing them of the recent event, and defiring a letter to his aunt, the countefs of Leiria, in Lifbon.

At the end of three days the guides left them, and he and Pierrot were left to themfelves: the latter, who was by nature fociable and loquacious, thinking the departure of the guides gave him a license to converse with his mafter, asked him whither and for what end he was going?

I am going, Pierrot, faid the youth, to fee the grand and univerfally admired city Lifbon, and to fearch for adventures as a valiant Chriftian knight fhould do.

I do not underftand what your honour means by adventures.

I am going then, faid he, to redrefs grievances, to right wrongs, to protect, when it falls in my way, poverty and weaknefs, againft the violence
and

and encroachments of the wealthy, the proud, and the strong.

God and the blessed Virgin prosper such intentions ! To help the weak and the poor is good ; but I doubt me your honour is too ready to fight for the strong and the great too. Now, although fighting be a very good thing upon occasions, when one is obliged to do it (and I can myself take and give a few hard knocks, as the saying is, when need requires, as well as another), yet methinks it is a strange sort of a trade to follow, and very unfit for a gentleman above all others.

Why for a gentleman, Pierrot ? said Alphonso, who liked his discourse.

I'll tell your honour—When a poor fellow is reduced to get his bread by knocking others in the head, it is hard enough upon him, but still perhaps he can do no better ; and if he endures hardship, or is knocked in the head himself, he may comfort himself with the thoughts that he might have endured worse ;—but here is your honour, who might be comfortable and warm at home, set out on a wild-goose chase to look for fighting, and after getting enough to satisfy a reasonable appetite on the part of the king, are

now

now going, for lack of better, to look for more of it on the part of the beggars.

But, Pierrot, honour is as great a reward, and as necessary to the existence of a gentleman, as bread is to that of the peasant.

I should be glad to know, returned Pierrot, what honour there can be in breaking bones, cracking of crowns, or poking spears into men's guts. I think it would be more honour to be sitting at home with your father, or playing innocently with the old armour, and the fierce old Baron at home at the castle of Duero.

But, Pierrot, said the youth, if some of us did not fight, we should become a prey to our enemies, and to all bad men who chose to wrong us.

Time enough, I say, still, when it comes to one's hand; but why run our heads against stone-walls, as the saying is? Your honour's father was as brave a warrior as any in Spain; but he was wise enough at last to go and stay at home in peace; and he has done more good, and got more honour in one week since, than he could have got in fifty years mad prize-fighting about the world. There is the old Baron de Rayo—why I suppose he has fought more than a thousand tigers, and
what

what is he the better for it? What was his honour at last? Why, an old baize coat, and a tune on the harp for his dinner. There was the noble Henrico Gonsalvo—he took a flight after honour, as you call it, and never came back again. Mark me, dear master, I am old, and can instruct from experience, more than others from books—honour is a very dangerous slippery thing—it is like a ghost—you think you see it—you may catch at it, but you never can hold it fast; and for my part, I have seen so much ruination brought about you all by it, that I tremble at the name, almost as much as I do at that of a ghost!

Upon my word, Pierrot, I had no conception that you were so ingenious a casuist—Proceed, for notwithstanding your erroneous imagination, your argument pleases me.

Well, then, your honour, there's Don—Don—Diabolo! oh, Don Rodrigo; he, too, is one of your men of honour. It seems then, honour is got different ways; for the day you took a fancy to try how a wild boar's tusk felt, and ran so honourably between death and the king, Don Rodrigo shook from head to foot—I was near him—his face was the picture of death—and I plainly perceived other marks of fear, which I won't mention.—Well, this Don Rodrigo is a man of honour

honour too—Now the question is this, If honour be got by cowardice, is it worth the labour and danger of fighting for?

Pierrot, said Alphonso, with all your simplicity you have put a question now that would puzzle a learned clerk to expound; but still from mistaking the subject. If, as you say, Don Rodrigo be a coward (which I believe is only the effect of your imagination), it must be considered as a misfortune, not a dishonour: it is true, he is in that case, not a man of military honour—but he may be a man of moral honour; and being a favourite of the king, the presumption is, that he must be in some respects honourable. For, know, Pierrot, that the roads to the temple of honour are many; and it is of little consequence which a man takes, so he pursues that for which he is qualified by nature, and makes true religion his guide, and a clear conscience his companion.

Now, your honour, quoth Pierrot, hath tied a knot with your tongue which you cannot untie with your teeth, though they were each as strong as that said boar's tusks.—You say honour is your aim—Very well—There are many roads, you say, to honour, no matter which you take—Then why not take the plain, easy, comfortable path, home? There, with your father and your friends, by and by

by with a pretty wife and a parcel of children, blessing all the poor with your bounty, they blessing you with their prayers—ah, Señor, there would be honour, there would be glory—But this pate-breaking, bloody, cut and thrust work—a plague upon it! I say—it is inhuman, unchristian, and abominable; and I cannot abide the thoughts of it, unless, as I said before, it falls in one's way, and then I will make the best use of the arms God gave me, and defend myself.

It was evening when this conversation passed between Alphonso and his faithful servant Pierrot. Just as the latter had concluded his last sentence, they were suddenly alarmed with the screaming of female voices at some distance before them in the forest—Alphonso, who, by the interruption of the trees, could not see the objects from whom the noise proceeded, spurred on his courser, and was followed close by Pierrot, whose aversion to fighting was more the result of his reason than the dictates of his heart, and who, in an instant, forgot all his prudent apothegms, and drove on his horse with as great eagerness as ever did knight of chivalry. After riding at full speed a few hundred yards, they found that the object of their pursuit had changed its position, and that the screams were more to the right hand, and observ-

ed that they were growing fainter, while the trampling of horses plainly bespoke a flight, and convinced him that no time was to be lost. They therefore turned to the right, and pressed forward with all their speed: for a considerable time they followed the noise, sometimes coming nearer, sometimes losing the sound, till at length they observed before them a chaise driving full speed, and guarded by a number of men well mounted and armed. At this sight they pushed their horses harder; and that which Pierrot rode being swifter than his master's, which was of the larger and heavier kind, he got up first, and concluding how things were, rushed eagerly by the horsemen, and with a stroke levelled the driver of the chaise, and then with a dextrous blow gave one of the mules which drew it a cut on the back of the neck, which laid him dead, and effectually stopped the progress of the whole; then turning about upon the horsemen, who had been already charged by Alphonso, they both laid about them with such fury, that after laying one dead, and wounding three others so that they could not escape, they put the remainder to flight. Alphonso then came up to the chaise, and found in it two ladies, one of whom had fainted, and was supported by the other, who demonstrated every mark of dismay and distraction. The
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veil of the lady who fainted was kept carefully down by the other; which Alphonso perceiving said, It is my earnest wish, lady, to render you and your companion who has fainted, every assistance in my power; but I fear my presence may, for some reasons, be at this time improper. I shall, if that be the case, withdraw, and stand within hearing, till it may be your pleasure to call upon me: meantime, madam, fear nothing; for be assured, that he who has had the felicity to step between you and the violence intended you, will protect your person to whatever place you may think it expedient to go for security.

Pardon me, sir, returned the lady, after a pause, in which she viewed the youth with an earnest eye, if, in the consternation I was in at the scene which has just passed, I should have confounded innocence with guilt, and conceived that we had been saved from one ruffian only to be subjected to the violence of another; but as the courtesy of your expressions, the delicacy of your manner, and, let me add, the nobleness of your air, proclaim you incapable of dishonour, I shall not scruple to put myself under your protection, and entreat your assistance to convey us to a town not two leagues hence, where I shall be tolerably secure till I can prosecute my journey: mean time I

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shall

shall be obliged to you to order your servant to bring a drop of water to the relief of this young lady. Alphonso immediately ran off, and in a few minutes returned with some water in his helmet, which he with many apologies presented to the lady; who removing the veil from the face of her who had fainted, discovered to the astonished youth the most exquisitely beautiful set of features he had ever beheld.

But if he thought them beautiful while bespread with the pale hue of death, what were his sensations when, as life returned, expression and colour were restored to her cheeks, and when opening her eyelids she stared wildly around her, and discovered a pair of eyes so far beyond any he had ever beheld! He was lost in rapturous astonishment—while she cried—Oh save me!—save me!—in pity save me from the tyrant!—Alas, where are we?—who is this cavalier? But why do I ask? He is one of the Duke's creatures! Yet surely he looks noble, and wears not the face of a ruffian.—Tell me, dear madam, where are we?—are we safe?—what means this pause of quiet so different from that which passed but now? Compose yourself, my child, said the elder, all is well: the perturbation of your spirits calls for rest; therefore refrain for the present from interrogating me, and content yourself with the assurance that we are safe as yet.

Rely, ladies, said Alphonso, upon such protection as I and my servant can afford you ; and rest assured that we will still defend you while we have life to move an arm.

It is not a few Portuguese that shall hurt you, said Pierrot, with a bow to the chaise, by way of hint to the ladies to be of good cheer.

I already perceive that, my good friend, said the lady.

Every thing being arranged in the best manner circumstances would allow of, and the prisoners secured, the ladies and their gallant champions set forward towards the town, where they arrived at a late hour. The ladies retired to a chamber, while Alphonso and Pierrot went to a magistrate, who dispatched a guard to bring the wounded men, attended by Pierrot to shew the place.

The ladies and Alphonso supped together—during supper, he sucked in the poison of love in such large draughts that he found little room for food ; while the elder lady cursorily hinted, that she was flying with her young ward into Spain, to release her from the addresses of an importunate amorous old nobleman of Portugal, whose influence at court made it dangerous to offend him. She added, that finding her going, he had taken that violent method of procuring by force that

which was denied to his rank, wealth, and solicitations.

Alphonso paid her a handsome compliment on the generosity and disinterestedness of her principles; said, that to give such youth, innocence, and beauty to the possession of old age, would be a crime worse than sacrilege; expressed his joy at having been instrumental to her safety, although he foresaw that his peace of mind for ever was the price at which he had purchased it; and concluded with a vehement declaration of love.

The elder lady said, that she hoped he would confine his discourse to such subjects as she could listen to—that indebted though they were to his valour and generosity, their acquaintance was too short, their knowledge of each other too slight, the passion he had avowed too suddenly formed, to countenance either him in making such a declaration, or her in listening to it. She therefore entreated that he would be silent on that subject, else she should be obliged, however unwillingly, to retire. Alphonso bowed, and for the rest of the short time they sat together confined himself to the language of the eyes.

Alphonso slept not the whole night; he tossed, he tumbled, he sighed; he formed a thousand strange, vague plans, every one of which he again rejected:

rejected: at last he determined to discover to the ladies who he was, in order to secure a favourable reception. At day-break he arose, and calling Pierrot, was by him informed, that the ladies, after parting from him, had given orders for the chaise and fresh mules, and departed.

Alphonso was in an agony of despair—he immediately took horse and pursued them in the route towards the confines of Spain, till their horses were unable to proceed, and he found pursuit vain. Alas! said he, what a wretch am I, to have seen such beauty, and to have it snatched from me in an instant!—Ungrateful!—no mark, no proof of gratitude or regard!—Oh God! Oh God! would that I were dead!

As to mark, if you mean a token, said Pierrot, perhaps we have got one without their consent or desire: look at this, said he, producing a small picture of the young and beautiful object of his affection.

Gracious God! exclaimed Alphonso—how—where—by what means did you get this?—did the dear lovely—cruel—did she give it?

No, said Pierrot.

How then? demanded Alphonso.

Why, when the alguazils and I went to the spot where we rescued the ladies, to look for the

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wounded ruffians, we could not find them; and searching about closely with the lanterns, I found that picture lying on the ground, which I brought back with a determination to give it to the lady; but now they are gone, I am glad you have it.

Blessed be your heart, my honest Pierrot! returned Alphonso; never shall this be forgotten to thee: for this, even this, will be some comfort, some consolation, under my miseries.

They then turned back towards Portugal by another road, and without further accident reached the city of Lisbon; where, to his great regret, he found that his aunt had, in consequence of the death of her husband, retired from Lisbon, and gone again into Spain.

C H A P. VII.

IT was now that season of the year when the people of all Christian countries devote themselves to joy, festivity, and thanksgiving, in anniversary commemoration of the birth of the Saviour of mankind, when Alphonso set out from Lisbon on his return to Castile, in consequence of a message from the king, who desired him to leave Portugal and return into Spain. He had formed the resolution of seeing as much as he could of the country, before his return; and therefore visited the city of Seville, purposing thence to proceed to Cordova, and so to Burgos. He left Seville on Christmas eve, and had already come near the ancient town of Carmona, when hearing a more than usual noise of bells ringing, he demanded of a shepherd, whom he accidentally overtook in the road, what was the occasion of it? You must be a stranger to Spain, although you speak the Castilian tongue, said the shepherd, not to know that to-morrow

will be the nativity of our blessed Redeemer, and that on this account the bells are ringing. I am, returned Alphonso, a Castilian, and a true Christian, thank God; but a long journey, and a variety of incidents, prevented me from attending to the time: I knew it was the season, but was perfectly heedless of the day itself being so near. Shall I be able to reach Cordova to-night? You may, returned the shepherd, if your horse be able to keep the pace he is at, and you happen to hit the right road, which I assure you is very difficult and very dangerous too; for there be so many roads before you, running like your fingers from your hand, that you will be very apt to miss the true one, and the caverns and old Moorish towers on the ridges of the Sierra Morena are filled with bands of robbers: however, keep to the right of yonder brow that is topped with a broken rock resembling a tower; as you proceed by that, you will keep still to the right till you come near the town of Palma; keep to the left of it, and you will probably meet some goatherd who can direct you; if not, God and our blessed Virgin be your guide!

As soon as they parted from the shepherd, Alphonso quickened his pace. If I were allowed to advise, said Pierrot, we should proceed to the town of Palma,

Palma, of which the shepherd spoke, and there go to midnight mass, and on the morrow proceed with a proper guide to Cordova: for it is not alone the robbers of which he told you that we have to dread; but this being the season when the fairies and all sorts of goblins are wandering about and playing their frolics, who knows what mischief may befall us?—And if we should chance to be misled by any of those malicious demons, and beguiled into those mountains, which look a thousand times blacker than night itself, we might possibly fall into the bowels of some monstrous cavern, or tumble down some of those frightful precipices with which I am sure those mountains abound.

Pierrot, interrupted Alphonso, why should you, being a Christian, suppose that we have more to fear from demons, as you call them, at this season than at another? I should suppose that we have rather less. However, I am positively determined to proceed; meantime you may remain behind, and follow me at your leisure: your fears might probably produce those very mischiefs of which you express such apprehension; therefore turn you into Palma, while I push on to Cordova. Pierrot said not a word, but followed his master, who pushed forward briskly. Night drew on apace,
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and they insensibly became shrouded in the bosom of a deep forest, bounded on either side by stupendous mountains, which rising almost perpendicularly hid their heads in the skies, and whose rugged protuberances seemed to frown with savage aspect on the narrow path that wound through the wood below. The awful solemnity of the scene was increased by a rapid rill of water, which growled adown the bosom of a glen, and, bursting into a sudden cataract, thundered on the rock below. Señor, said Pierrot earnestly, hear me, for the blessed Virgin's sake hear me; remember that a fool's advice has saved many a wise man from ruination. I warn you that we are going astray—return, for the love of Christ, and do not run headlong upon your fate. Peace, peace! returned Alphonso—didst thou ever see a spot so calculated to call up ideas of sublimity and magnificence? Didst thou ever see so charming a night? The moon herself seems to assume increased splendour, to chase away the obtruding clouds, and shine with unobstructed lustre on the business of this night. Blessed Virgin! what is that? exclaimed Pierrot. What do you talk of? said Alphonso. If I live, said Pierrot, I saw the strangest sight——It is your fear, not your eyes that saw it, returned Alphonso. Just as he spoke, he

he descried a person of more than common size before him, who seemed walking hastily through the path of the forest, in the same direction that he was going: he spurred his horse into a round pace in order to come up with him; but, though he at last pushed him to a gallop, the object still kept before him, till coming to an angle formed by a narrow road, at the foot of a perpendicular corner of the hill, of immense height, he turned round it, and got out of sight. Alphonso still quickening his pace, turned it also, and found a vast open plain, extensive beyond sight. Nothing was to be seen—he drew in his bridle, and stood bewildered in contemplation, while all was wrapped in a silence truly awful: he was lost in astonishment, and remained for some time in a state of doubt and contemplation. At length turning to Pierrot, whose fears were wound up to a pitch of superstitious horror not to be described, It is not possible, said he, that this delicious plain should be uninhabited, yet can I see no trace of human residence, and the moon is so bright that I think I should if there were any. I will holla aloud—perhaps there may be some one within hearing. He then called out with all his might, and was answered by an echo which reverberated his

his voice a number of times, increasing each time in loudness till at last it died away in the same number of reverberations again. Utter dismay seized Pierrot—Alphonso was not perfectly at ease—not a soul appeared—he waited many minutes with impatience—I will holla again, said he.—For the mercy of God, Señor, said Pierrot, take care what you do—let us call upon Heaven, and turn our horses back again into the path we came. Alphonso perceiving no track in the plain before him, agreed to do, as Pierrot advised him, and turned towards the road from which he had wandered in pursuit of the figure. He had scarcely gone three steps when the air was filled with lamentable screeches—he stopped—they ceased.—Blessed Virgin! said Pierrot, where are we got, or what can those screeches mean? Sot, cried Alphonso rather peevishly, do you not perceive that they are owls which fly in clouds about us? By this time he again bethought him of the road, and being at the corner looked out for it, and perceived many paths leading through the forest in that direction. While he was considering which of them to take, a sigh of deep anguish, heaved as from the bosom of a giant behind him, caught his ear: he turned his head,

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and again saw the figure walking at an easy pace ; he wheeled round his horse and again pursued, observing it attentively : it had a long spear in its hand, and glided with amazing swiftness before him. Stop, said he in a loud voice, stop, and I swear by the God of Christians you shall receive no harm. Immediately the vast concave of the hills was filled all round with an echo, which in the most awful manner repeated, You shall receive no harm. The figure outstripped him, and again disappeared. Alphonso paused—then turning to Pierrot said, There must be something in this—come of it what will, I am determined to proceed in this direction and then spurred his horse forward. He had not gone far, when the moon all at once became obscured—the most dismal darkness, interrupted ever and anon with flashes of lightning which served but to make it the more horrible, succeeded : rain fell in torrents, while the wind blew as if it would root up the surrounding mountains from their bases, and filled the air with groans and hollow sounds. He spurred his horse into a gallop, throwing the reins on his neck, and leaving him to his own direction—or to that of a superior guide.

He had not rode long before he found his horse stop suddenly ; and looking attentively before him, thought that through the dark void he could perceive

ceive a high wall with battlements: he again called out aloud; a tumultuous noise was heard, and all at once he perceived several large windows, resembling those of a church illuminated by a strong light from within. Concluding it to be a chapel lighted up for the purpose of celebrating midnight mass, he blessed God for the miraculous event which led him to it, and dismounting from his horse sought out an entrance.—There was none on that end, and the place on either side was so closely enveloped in thick underwood and bushes, that he found some difficulty in getting through them. He pierced through, however, and found in the side a door open; he entered it, and, passing through an aisle perfectly illuminated, found himself in the body of a magnificent church and very near the altar. He wondered much to find that there was no one in it; but concluding that the priests were in the sacristy and the congregation not come, he knelt down to pray. Scarcely had he been in this posture two minutes, when music the most heavenly struck up, and he heard the *De Profundis* chanted by voices more than human, and the whole fabric shook with the notes of an organ whose deep tones equalled those of thunder. He heard, but saw no one, and was riveted to the ground with astonishment—the music stopped—a bell that seemed

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to shake the church to its foundation tolled, and he reckoned twelve—the light vanished—his ears were assailed with the most piercing sighs—a hideous noise like the crashing of a vast pile of falling rocks was heard—he drew his sword, and offered up a prayer to Heaven for his safety—A noise, as of the flight of an immense pair of wings passing through the air, was heard wafting its heavy way round the vaulted cieling of the aisle—The resolution even of Alphonso could scarcely support it. Whatever thou art, said he in a low and solemn tone, that hast led me into this perilous and awful place, I conjure thee by him whom the Almighty this blessed night gave as a ransom for our sins, to speak thy intent—He paused for a reply, while his bristled hair stood erect upon his head, the marrow in his bones froze as into stone, and his head even to the deep recesses of his brain felt as if congealed into solid ice. He heard the clashing of a sword against armour—his mind was wrought up to the madness of horrid expectation—and straight a figure, such as he had seen, but rendered visible by a lambent flame which played about it, stood before him. It seemed far above the common size, but its aspect was rendered still more formidable by an enormous warlike plume that nodded on its helmet,

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and seemed reflected as in a mirror, in the brightness of the armour in which it was cased. Excess of horror wound up the sinking spirits of Alphonso, and he put himself in a firm posture of defence—Whatever thou art, said he, approach no nearer—my trust is in the Almighty, and if thou be wicked thou canst not hurt me. If there be aught that I can do——The figure sighed. Alphonso's fear was lost in compassion and curiosity—Fear not, dear youth, said the figure, reserve your sword for vengeance.—With those words, the helmet fell from his head, and disclosed a countenance of majestic sadness, pale, bloody; while long redundant hair entangled with clotted gore hung in loose disorder over his shoulders: again it sighed, then glided backwards till it reached the wall, which yawned and shut him in. Alphonso, his senses suspended between amazement and pity, by a convulsive impulse of which he was unconscious, darted forward, and plunged his sword after the figure into the wall, which closing held it fast.—He exerted all his strength to draw it out, in vain. While he was thus engaged, a strain of music more soothing than human skill could produce, struck up, and lulled him by degrees into a sweet and gentle sleep, and he sunk upon the ground. The figure still was present to his imagination

imagination—he dreamed that it took him by the hand, and, leading him through a number of dark and intricate windings, presented him to Baron de Rayo, saying, To your conduct I consign him—and then presenting him a large key said, Take this, consult the Baron, and be resolute—nor bolts, nor bars, nor walls of adamant, nor human fraud nor human force can resist those whom God has designed to be the instruments of Heaven's vengeance. On which the armour of the figure gaped, a skeleton fell from it in fragments at his feet; while the coat closed upon him, the helmet and plumes lodged upon his head, and he found himself armed cap-a-pee: encumbered with the unusual weight he struggled and awoke, and perceived that day had dawned.

His first sensations on awaking were little more than a dream: he was bewildered in a maze of awe and wonder at what he had seen, and in strange conjectures on that which he had dreamed; he could hardly determine at first, whether the whole had not been a dream, till looking at the wall he perceived his sword sticking in it: he caught it by the hilt, intending to use all his strength to draw it out, but it yielded to a twitch. In doing this he missed his ring; he sought for it up and down the floor for some time in vain:

at last recollecting the violence of his efforts in the night to draw forth his sword, he turned to search there. There was a small heap of rubbish lying under: he scraped it up in search of the ring, which he found: just as he took the ring up, he perceived a key lying in the rubbish, and snatching it up also saw that it exactly resembled that which he had dreamed of.—Gracious God! he exclaimed, to what mysterious agency am I thus conducted? then kneeling, and devoutly lifting up his hands and eyes to Heaven, fervently prayed for fortitude and wisdom proportioned to the great work of which he saw himself likely to be made the instrument.

Having thus prayed, he found himself unusually invigorated and cheerful:—he looked around him, and was surprised to find the face of every thing entirely different from that which he had the preceding night conceived it to be. He found that the church had been suffered to fall to ruin—branches of the trees without were striking through the half-demolished window-cases—weeds were growing near that which had been the altar—the cieling was pierced with holes and breaches which served as nests for various birds—there were no doors but one small one which were not stopped up. He got up into one of the windows,

dows, and saw a large space resembling a garden, but filled with trees, whose spreading branches interwoven with each other almost excluded light or air, while the bottom was choked with noisome weeds, briars and bushes : this space was bounded on the other side by a large building, which though very high had no windows in that direction. He again descended, and went into the aisle, which he found in the same way enveloped in bushes ; he sought for the door by which he had entered, and with difficulty found it ; it was a winding passage through a wall—a great gate (once the entrance) he observed to be carefully closed up, but it was in a different direction from the passage at which he had come in. He then returned to the chapel, and with a scrutinizing eye observed the place where his sword was stuck, in order to mark it : he took out his book and accurately noted all the particulars, the altar serving him as the great guiding mark ; then, going out through the aisle and narrow passage, with difficulty made his way through the bushes, marking it carefully however by breaking down some large branches. After winding round the wall he found Pierrot waiting in such a state of horror and suspense as human nature was scarcely able to support—Had you stayed much longer, Señor, said

he, I should have expired—How you have the heart to endure such things I cannot tell—I am sure I am afraid of no living man that ever wore a head, and yet if my hair be not turned white with fear I much wonder at it.—Why, what now? what has been the matter?—Matter, your honour!—God knows, matter enough—why, your honour had not gone as long as I could reckon ten, when all the lights in the windows went out—and then I heard a clashing of swords—and then groaning—and then shrieks, like those of unfortunate departed souls in trouble. I thought that the life would leave me: however, fearing you might have been attacked, I resolved not to act like a cowardly rascal, and got off my horse, drew my sword, and went round this wall: then the noise ceased; I attempted to break through the bushes, but, oh Lord! if I am here alive, a thousand snakes began to hiss at me like red hot horse-shoes in water, so that I was fain in spite of me to draw back. When I returned to the place where I left the horses, I found that they had run off about the plain; a plague upon them!—I ran after them, for the moon shone bright again, and, a curse confound the brutes! they would not let me catch them till about ten minutes ago. I at last began to think of going in to look for you, and if I could not find you

to set off to Don Isidor as fast as I could, to tell him the dismal news ; but, thanks to the blessed Virgin! you are here, and, as I think, safe. So mount your horse, clap spurs to him, and without once looking behind you gallop away from this mansion of demons, fairies, ghosts and devils—Lord, Señor ! are not you dead with fear? Make haste, make haste ; and when you get out of the way of the demons—I mean the good people that inhabit this place—let me know what befel you : but do not say a word here ; for they would set us all wrong in an instant, and keep us another night, perhaps for ever, in this abominable place, which looks somehow more black and gloomy than hell itself. Nay, I dare say, that every step we move we tread on the bodies of murdered people—haste you therefore, dear master of mine, haste you—mount your horse, and let us be away as fast as our best legs can carry us.

Pierrot, said Alphonso, I do firmly believe you to be, in an encounter with mere flesh and blood like yourself, as brave a fellow as ever Castile bred : but superstition makes you in other cases a coward to excess—I say to excess, for it deprives you of your senses. What stronger proof can there be of this, than your distaste to this place ? which I solemnly declare I think to be the most charming

spot by far that I have ever beheld: here there is nothing wanting which can render the face of a country enchanting.

Aye, aye, interrupted Pierrot, God knows, there are charms and enchantments enough in it: but for mercy's sake, Señor, make haste, and let us begone before it grows dark—I dare say that the evening is approaching fast.

There again, returned the youth, you betray the madness occasioned by your fears. Why, for, do you not perceive that it is yet scarcely morning? Even now the sun barely springs from the top of yonder hill, and with feeble rays shines upon us so obliquely, that our shadows reach almost beyond our sight. I cannot leave this cheering spot till I indulge my sight with more of its beauties. Methinks I could live here for ever! Behold how yonder mountain, steep, almost perpendicular, rears on the south its huge stupendous head to the clouds, and shields the plain below from the scorching power of the sun's meridian heat—while the earth, as if grateful for its protection, spreads at its feet a rich carpet of never-fading green! Look again to the west—see where myriads of oaks and cork trees, ranged by the hand of nature in gay and beautiful parade, one above the other, up the slope of that hill, spread in
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kindly majesty their arms afar, and join to form a canopy unequalled in the palaces of princes, to shade the shepherd and his flock from the sultry evening's heat; and see above them, on the grassy top, the shepherd now draws forth his flock to feed. This is not all: behold where on the east the copious Guadalquiver rolls its majestic flood, fertilizing the adjacent lands, while woods of olives, corn-fields, and vineyards, cover its bosom with the wealth of Spain, and lovely orange groves fringe its banks with a rich tissue of lively green and gold; oh, it is transporting! here could I rest—here could I rest for ever!

Here a bell tolled for some time—Do you not perceive, continued Alphonso, that in the bosom of this thick wood, and beyond those stately ruins rising out of it, there must be a place inhabited? for that is the bell either of some nobleman's castle or of some neighbouring convent tolling to matins. We will see, said he, proceeding to mount his horse.

Then, said Pierrot, if it must be so, it must be so; come on, then—do as you like; it shall never be said that Pierrot lagged behind; or that, when hell was broke loose, he could not stand fire as well as another.—No, no, if Pierrot be not as well able as e'er an Alphonso in the

land (begging your honour's pardon) to endure a flaking of fire, sword, enchantment, or demons, let him never receive mercy.

By this time Alphonso was mounted, and turning his horse towards the west proceeded slowly through the valley, looking ever and anon around him, stopping his horse and musing—at one time admiring the beauty of the place, at another making such observations as he thought necessary to a future recognition of it. He soon perceived on his left hand a rising ground, resembling a moat, which started from the root of the mountain, and turning his horse ascended it; from thence he had a more enlarged view of the plain below, and could distinctly observe, at the back of the old buildings in which he had spent his night, and close to them, a building which, from having a belfry, he concluded to be a convent: beyond this, he thought he saw, though indistinctly, marks of unusual cultivation; he therefore dismounted, and with much pains clambered up the rocks behind, from whence he could perceive a magnificent castle, with turrets, moats, draw-bridge, &c. and an extensive demesne in high improvement behind it. He wished to see some one to whom he could apply for information; but all near him was a blank and silent desert,

fert. Come hither, Pierrot, said he, and be comforted—See you yonder convent?—I do, Señor.—Well, alight and come hither, and I will shew you something more. Pierrot ascended to him—Do you see yonder castle? That I do, your honour.—Do you observe the turret and draw-bridge? I do, Señor.—Well, what think you now? Why, I think as before; and the more so, on account of that castle—for it is there your devil's deeds are done.—Ah, Lord! your great men with castles think no more of taking the lives of men, than old women do of killing chinchas, or cracking fleas.—Lord help us! Still, I say to your honour, let us be gone, for there is no more mercy in those castles, than there is pity in the heart of a witch.—Pierrot, said Alphonso, how shall we find out to whom that castle belongs? Suppose you were to go thither and enquire. Why, as to that, returned Pierrot, if your honour commands, I will go though it were to the mouth of hell.—But I would almost as soon lose my life at once—nay, I am sure I should never live to return to you again. Well, then, generous Pierrot, returned Alphonso, I will not command, nor even permit you to go; but we will ride up through the wood to those goatherds who sit on the hill beyond it, and they perhaps will inform us. Overjoyed to
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be released from the visit to the castle, Pierrot approved of the proposal with alacrity, and they arrived at the verge of the wood, which was so thick, that a person on horseback could not make way through it; they therefore rode along it, and at last came to a path or rather narrow road, which from its direction seemed to lead up the hill: by this path, after many windings and turnings, he got to the open space on the top, where he saw, not far from him, the goatherds sitting at their breakfast. He rode up to and accosted them with his usual courtesy, which they returned by inviting him to take a share of their fare. He felt himself not disinclined to eat, and alighting sat down cheerfully to a meal of bread and oranges, with some poor wine: while he was making a hearty repast upon those, he enquired what the name of that beautiful valley was, and whose was the castle? when the eldest of the goatherds obliged him with the following recital.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

The Goatherd's Story.

I AM now old, and have all my life followed the business of a goatherd, and of course must have seen vast numbers of beautiful places; but never have I seen any place to equal in beauty this very spot of Vallesanto; and this, Señor, all men will tell you, was its reputation time out of mind; and the richness of its pastures, the coolness of its air, the plenty of its provisions, the content of its inhabitants, the sanctity of its convent, and the virtues of the family who were lords of it, made it the topic of conversation in all neighbouring parts. The present lord of all the country you see round is the Marquis de Punalada, almost as old as myself: he came to the possession of the estate and castle at an early age, and was beloved by all who knew him; his fame was not confined to this valley, for there were few in Spain who

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did not hear of and acknowledge his greatness. He married a lady his equal in rank, reputation, and fortune; but in charity, piety, and all the virtues that distinguish Christians, superior to all the men and women of her day. They lived long together in the greatest happiness, and had two children, a son and a daughter; and all the poor rejoiced in the prospect of finding one day, in the virtues of the children, a continuation of the advantages they had already derived from the charity of their forefathers. Soon after the birth of those children, the Marquis was called on by the king to attend him to the wars—so he went, leaving his lady and family behind him, and from that time Vallesanto began to decay. Captivated by the king's favour, he grew proud, and forgot his good lady and children at home. However, at last he did come—but so different a man in his conduct from what he had been, that no one would have believed him to be the same person.—The dear Marchioness took it sorely to heart, and died suddenly—and he again was so affected at her death that he hid from company, betook himself entirely to the convent, and many said that he was going to take the cowl. However, after some time he quitted it, and took his children to a distant part where the king had given him a large

large estate; and then there were reports that my lady's spirit appeared at night, and made the castle uneasy to him: be that as it may, he came here but seldom, and for years the children remained at his other estate. However, at last he removed them here; and the cause that was assigned for it was so extraordinary, that if I had not had it from one of his own domestics I should not have believed it. In short, the young lady had fallen in love desperately, and what was worse, hopelessly—it was with a picture! It was said to be the picture of some man dead God knows how long. However, this did not satisfy the young lady, but she must go to a Hadador*, who told her, that whenever she should see a man who resembled that picture, the house of Punalada would tumble to the ground. Some of her attendants informed the Marquis of this prediction; in consequence of which he hurried her off here, and shut her up in a chamber of the castle, where she was watched with the utmost vigilance: no one had access to her but the Marquis, the Father Prior of the convent, her brother, and some old domestics; for, having in his fury ordered the picture to be burnt, he had nothing to give the

* A fortune-teller.

servants as a guide ; whereas, had he kept the picture, he might have compared all comers with it, and so perhaps kept off danger. As misfortunes seldom come alone, the Marquis perceived a new turn in the castle, which threatened not only sorrow but shame : in short, he found that my young lord, his son, had fallen violently in love with his sister, and was abandoned enough to make odious proposals to her. The unhappy young lady, to shelter herself, told the Marquis, who directly put her into the convent ; while he himself, racked with some inward affliction, shut himself from all intercourse but with the Padre Prior. Meantime people gave their tongues a loose, and talked strangely ; the place, even the convent, was said to be haunted ; a chapel, in which mass was sometimes celebrated, was shut up and let to run to ruin : in short, Señor, nothing but misfortune, affliction, and bad luck, has for many years attended the family and the place ; and the neighbouring goatherds have forsaken the valley upon account of frightful appearances that haunt it.

Do you mind that, Señor ? interrupted Pierrot—Why, good man, as his worship and I were last night—Alphonso darted an angry look at him, and he was silent.

As for matter of that, continued the goatherd,

who observed Alphonso, the man can tell us nothing new, so your honour need not have any scruples—there is more talk than you think of—and in truth the Marquis is now for his tyranny, wickedness, and moroseness, more disliked and suspected than he ever was beloved; for though we of this place be poor, we have clear consciences, and worship God and our Redeemer, and hate wickedness so much, that we would not like a king that was bad. Castilians, thank God, are good Christians, and would not barter with the devil, though they were to gain worlds and their wealth by the bargain. But to conclude this strange story, the young man, instigated by the devil—abandoning all sense of religion and virtue, and running counter to the course of nature, finding himself unable to prevail on his sister to indulge an incestuous passion for him, determined to enjoy her by force or stratagem; and to this end, with large gifts and great promises, bribed a servant who attended her to aid his designs, and, as she since confessed, to put a sleepy dose in her drink, and let him in at night.—As God, who directs things for the protection of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty, would have it, all his plans turned to his own ruin. Her chamber was
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in the uppermost story of the convent, and looked into a court-yard : by means of immense bribes he found his way into the yard, while his accomplice, the lady's servant maid, let down a ladder made of silk, which he had supplied her with, and which she fastened above to one of the iron bars of the window. He ascended—but just as he got near the window the ladder gave way, he tumbled headlong down, and was caught on the spikes of the railing below—meantime the jade above threw out the ladder, and went to bed. In the morning his lordship was found dead—the Marquis was with difficulty prevented from slaying himself: an enquiry was set on foot, and the holy brotherhood extorted from the wretch a confession. Soon after the Marquis brought from court a nephew of his, who is to inherit the estate, and hoped to marry him to the young lady, but she absolutely refused. Thus things remain at present—his lordship drags on a horrible life in his castle, and the young lady a wretched one in the convent.

By the time that the goatherd had finished his story Don Alphonso had eaten his breakfast ; when rising, and in the most courteous terms thanking them for their hospitality, and the old man in particular

ticular for his story, he mounted his horse, and being directed in his road, took his departure, having ordered Pierrot to give each of them a piece of money, and the old man five.

They had not gone far, when Pierrot taking advantage of his master's indulgence began—And now, Señor, what think you of this same Marquis de Punalada? Is it not better a thousand times to be dead than lead such a life as he does? And I warrant he is more careful of it too than you or I of ours, and so it seems by his watching—and does not that shew his wickedness? God help him! God help him! Bad as life is, he fears death may be worse.—Oh Lord! oh Lord! preserve me from the guilt of murder!—If the devil so far got the better of me as to make me commit murder—I—I—I don't know what I should do—I would cut a hole in the ground and bury myself in it.—Murder!—Oh, I freeze at the very thoughts of it. The greatest king in Christendom could not give life to a frog or a blade of grass—what must he be then who takes away the life of a Christian? Yet, God help us! such is the madness of the world, that nothing gets a man so great a name as killing another—and the more he kills, the greater is his honour, as you call it! Ah,

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Don Alphonso! quit this life of war, and lead one of blessed peace, as a true Christian should do.

Upon my word, Pierrot, I must allow that you apophthegmatize most ingeniously, but I cannot see how that which you have said could arise from the subject we were talking of.

What! Does not your honour think that the Marquis has been guilty of murder? The way he lives—the haunting of the place—besides, while the old man was telling you his story, another of the goatherds told me as much as made my blood run cold—I may be wrong to be sure, but I would not for all the estates and castles in Andalusia have the conscience of the Marquis.

At last they got into the high road, and early that evening arrived at Cordova. Here Alphonso found himself divided between two duties, and debated with himself whether he should directly proceed to court to the king, or go to his father's, to throw himself at his feet, and, in conformity to the monition in the dream, to consult the Baron. After some deliberation, he determined to trust rather to the tenderness of a father than the caprice of a court, and accordingly went straight to Burgos, from whence he dispatched the two following letters by Pierrot:

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TO DON ISIDOR.

" As I approached towards home, I found myself divided between two conflicting duties, one to my father, the other to my sovereign; and though my inclinations fought on the side of the former, prudence carried the victory in favour of the latter. The king honoured me beyond my merits, and this raised up enemies against me at court. It is to obviate their machinations that I delay the happiness of throwing myself at the feet of the best and most beloved of parents; a happiness, however, which I shall not deny myself many days—hoping soon to embrace you.

ALPHONSO."

TO BARON DE RAYO.

" A great and portentous incident, of which I hope soon to inform you, calls me to hasten to the castle of Duero; it is such as I dare not commit to paper, nor know I whether it should be unfolded to any one else, even to my father.—I am obliged first, however, to wait on the king; and will, as soon as I can, receive your benediction in person. It is a supernatural monition I

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have to communicate—I cannot therefore express my anxiety on that account, and am apprehensive of delays on the part of his majesty. If you could prevail on Don Isidor to accompany you to Burgos, you might, perhaps, find the fatigue of the journey compensated by the strange eventful history I have to relate, the clue of which seems reserved for you alone to unravel—I can say no more in this way.—Turn this in your mind, and bestow your prayers on

ALPHONSO.”

Alphonso was received with every mark of tenderness by the king, who informed him, that the author of the anonymous letter was too wary to fall into the trap projected for him—but that he was fully convinced Don Rodrigo and his mother were at the bottom of it. In little more than a week after he had dispatched the letters to his father and the Baron, he had the happiness of seeing them at Burgos. The latter was impatient to hear the promised story, and closeted himself for above an hour with Alphonso, who gave him an accurate account of every particular, not forgetting the goatherd's account of the Marquis de Punalada.

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The Baron, after examining and questioning him over and over on the same particulars, at length was silent; and, after ruminating for some time, desired Don Isidor to be called in. To him he made Alphonso again relate the wonders of Vallesanto. Don Isidor was astonished. It is, said the Baron vehemently, it is the blood of Gonsalvo crying from the ground!—I own it is extraordinary, said Don Isidor, who turning to Alphonso, sifted him with all his art; and confessed he scarcely knew what to say to it. Say to it! exclaimed the Baron, we will act to it: nor shall my soul find one moment's rest, till the horrid secret is revealed. Don Isidor, your whole aid is requisite, and I demand it. Don Isidor bowed assent. I request, continued the Baron, that Father Thomas may forthwith be sent for, together with one more attendant such as you can depend on.—Juanico, interposed Alphonso. He is the very man I wish, returned the Baron. Alphonso was astonished—he saw in the Baron a new man: youthful vigour re-animated every feature, enlivened every motion, and gave to his limbs a force, and to his whole air a formidable energy, that age never exhibits. Don Isidor was delighted—he once again saw that Baron Rayo that used at once to impress

him with love and awe ; and his soul again confessed the pleasing necessity of obedience. All shall be done, Baron, said he : need I say that my hand, heart, and life, are devoted to the accomplishment of your desire ? Yes, yes, said the Baron, striding across the room ; the stains, the sorrows, the disgraces, the murders, that have brought the house of Rayo to the ground, though they cannot be repaired, shall be revenged—most horribly revenged—and this arm shall be the instrument !

But, dear Baron, interrupted Don Isidor, repress this rising choler—overcome those emotions, which indulged may perhaps be the means of frustrating your views.

Here, said the Baron quickly, take that hand—does it tremble ? Feel this heart—beats it a higher or quicker pulse than usual ? No : this that you call emotion is the fixed temper of my soul—the unalterable condition of my mind. By Heaven I will mince that viper, and grind him and his house, even to the last clod of his generation, into dust !

Don Isidor was silent—Alphonso felt an unusual trepidation.—The Baron seemed to tread in air.

Pierrot was again sent back to Duero, with a
a letter

a letter to Father Thomas, who in eight days more returned, together with Juanico, to Burgos. Every necessary preparation was made; and they, that is to say—the Baron, Don Isidor, Father Thomas, and Alphonso, attended by Juanico and Pierrot, set out for Vallesanto.

C H A P. IX.

ON the fifth day they arrived at the entrance of the valley, just as the sun was half way dipped behind the western hill on which Alphonso and his servant had before breakfasted with the goat-herds. Don Isidor looked about him as he advanced, wrapt in delight with the beauty of the scene—Never, said he, have I seen any thing to equal it! They came to a little rill of water clear as the purest crystal, which ran towards the river—in some places forming the most enchanting pools, deep, pellucid, and sheltered by hanging willows—and in others babbling over pebbles with a sweet and lulling murmur. Alphonso had not seen it before, having entered the valley on the southward. This, said he, only this was wanting to make Vallesanto more than terrestrial; let us cross it at this shallow ford, and shelter us from observation in yonder clump of trees, while I point out to you the situation of the place—They accordingly crossed the brook, rode up to the clump, in the heart of which they found a beautiful recess of an almost circular form, concealed

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by a thickly knotted underwood from view; while an immense cork tree which grew in the centre of it, extending its large branches thick set with leaves, afforded a roof almost impervious to the sight, and which promised a shelter from the severest storms. Into this, after having dismounted, they entered, and led their horses. Alphonso then brought the Baron, Don Isidor, and Father Thomas forth, and pointed out to them the perpendicular angular rock—the moat—and the wood in which was buried the scene of their intended operations—The bell tolled—'twas for vespers—They returned to the thicket, where Father Thomas said mass, and all joined in prayer. When the bell tolls again, said Father Thomas, it will be time for us to proceed; the Fathers will then retire to rest, and by the time we get there all will be quiet. At length the bell tolled—the moon was quite obscured, and but a few scattered stars lent barely light enough to direct them in their way. Leaving their attendants to take care of the horses, they set out, and crossed the plain directly towards the convent: as they approached it, they heard a foot before them treading with slow and heavy steps—they stood and listened—it stopped—they again proceeded—again it was heard—again they stopped—and
again

again it ceased—It is the echo of our feet, said Don Isidor—Why not then of all our feet? said the Baron—It is but of one person. A violent stamp of a foot attended with the rattle of armour was heard—We come! exclaimed the Baron in a tone of terrific intrepidity—then turning to them—Haste you, let us forward—we are called. At length they came near the wall. Beyond this, said Alphonso, is the pathway—it is difficult to find it—nevertheless, I think I cannot fail of knowing it. They walked slowly on: I see a light, said Don Isidor in a low voice—let us stop—we may be discovered.—I see it too, said the Baron, but fear it not—it is friendly, let us get on. He then advanced, and broke through the bushes, his vigour and alacrity surprising the rest who followed: Father Thomas brought up the rear. Let me, said Alphonso, go first and find out the passage. He groped along the wall, and found out the narrow entrance.—Here it is, said he, follow me. They all followed. When got into that part which he supposed to be the aisle—Now am I at a loss, said he, to find the door into the chapel.—I have brought a small lamp, said the Baron; we will strike a light, but perhaps it may discover us. A bell tolled, and straight the chapel within was illuminated—Blessed be God and our Redeemer! said Father Thomas

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—They all said Amen, and entered the chapel. Father Thomas advanced to the altar—knelt and prayed—They all did the same—He said a short mass, and they arose. Here, said Alphonso, here is the spot, behold the mark of the sword. At these words the light was suddenly extinguished, and they left in utter darkness. The Baron then lighted his lamp, and with Father Thomas looked around—This, said the priest, is the west : here must have been the great entrance, and lo ! it is stopped up—This then, said he, moving on, is the north ; and what should bring this pile of rubbish here, I cannot guess, for over it there is no mark of ruins.—That we will see, said the Baron, let us remove it. He then drew a massy Moorish sabre from his side, and fell to work loosening the rubbish, while Alphonso and Don Isidor drew it away—At length the sabre met resistance—What can this be ? said the Baron. He worked with his hand, and felt till he found a large chink—he put in the sabre and raised it up—It was a large stone—Here have been much pains taken, said he, to jam those stones together. By this time he had got to the level of the floor : the Baron picked away a layer of stones, and found another : he groped again to find a chink, but all was solid—Alphonso knelt down and inspected it closely : it was an immense
stone

stone of four feet in surface. We must raise it, said the Baron : see if there be any the smallest opening in which to insinuate the point of the sabre.—I cannot perceive one, said Alphonso, but here I see the upper part of a regular arch.—Where? said the Baron.—Here, just where you removed the stones.—We must remove that too, said the Baron; it conceals some deed which shuns the light. The Almighty can, if it so please him, disclose the adamantine entrails of the earth, and shall he not give us strength to accomplish this?—As he spoke those last words, he fell vigorously to work, till he found the under edge of the slab of stone that opposed his passage. Having made a way for their hands, they all exerted their strength, lifted it up on one end, and thence turned it over. Underneath was a flight of stone stairs going downward, filled with rubbish. As one only could work in so narrow a place, an affectionate scuffle ensued who that one should be—Alphonso and Don Isidor both insisting on the Baron's yielding it to them. They were interrupted by a noise—they listened—a sigh which seemed to burst the bosom that it came from filled the chapel. The Baron worked with redoubled ardour, throwing up the rubbish that obstructed the stairs—Alphonso beheld him with astonishment; the alacrity of youth and the strength

strength of Hercules seemed united in him.—Here is a door, said he. A hollow sound within stopped him: he hearkened, and distinctly heard the rattling of armour, and the sounds of hasty footsteps running to and fro—Endue me with strength, said he, great Father of might! and tore up the rubbish, as the enraged lion tears up the earth with his claws: at length he got to the door which opened outwards, and was fastened within. Here, said he, is a door without a key-hole or any visible means of opening it—If, said Don Isidor, we could with a knife cut an entrance for our hands, perhaps our united strength might get it open. Perhaps so, said the Baron, but where is the knife? Here, said Father Thomas.—Don Isidor took the knife and descended: he cut for some time: the impatient Baron snatched it from him; the wood flew in showers of splinters from his hands. At length they made room for their hands, and the Baron, Don Isidor, and Alphonso tore it open: it was fastened by a chain hooked to a ponderous stone within. Just as they opened the door a most transporting peal of musick struck up, and voices more than human sung the Nunc dimittis. They entered, drew the door after them, and got into a passage arched, low, and narrow. They went forward, the Baron with his sword drawn

drawn leading the way, then Alphonso, then Don Isidor; and last, with a crucifix in his hand, Father Thomas: at the end of the passage they found a door bolted on the side next them. There must be some other way that we have not yet seen, into this passage, said the Baron; for the door by which we entered, as well as this, are bolted on the inside. They looked attentively on either side, and saw none. Let us open this then, said the Baron. He opened it, and they found a large extensive cavern filled with dead bodies in various stages of dissolution, some mouldered to dust, some half consumed, and some again in a more offensive state of putrefaction, lying on their backs with crucifixes tied erect in their hands.—This, said Father Thomas, is the cemetery of the convent: what shall we do here? Hardly were those words pronounced when their ears were assailed with a violent rattling of armour behind them: they started, and looked round them into the passage they had come through. Gracious God! exclaimed Alphonso, there is the figure. I see it, said the Baron, looking at it with a fixed and undismayed attention—I see it—Oh Isidor, dost thou not?—The tears rolled in torrents down his cheeks: he could no more, but uttered a groan that seemed to have rent his soul from its tenement. The figure stood

stood—All gazed in a transport of horror except the Baron, who seemed moved only by grief. It lifted up its vizor—Oh all ye saints of Heaven! exclaimed Don Isidor, is not that Gonfhalvo?—The Baron put the lamp into the hands of Father Thomas, and advanced to it up the dark passage: presently they heard the Baron cry out, Speak, oh speak, Gonfhalvo!—and instantly the crash of a heavy suit of armour falling to the ground—Come hither, said the Baron. They came up—Oh Isidor! said he, prepare yourself for such a miraculous event as will ever serve to remind you of the immediate agency of the Almighty, and strike scepticism and the reasonings of pigmy men dumb; bring hither the lamp, here we must enter.—Why this is a wall! said the Priest. We must enter it nevertheless, said the Baron. The active mind and piercing eye of Alphonso ended the difficulty: he found a low door, which like the first shut on the inside, but was opened with less pains: the foul and condensed air rushing forth blew out the lamp, and they were again in darkness: the young marrow of Alphonso froze with horror, and even Don Isidor was dismayed.—The Baron again struck a light, by which they found that they were in a small vault, arched over head, and low.—Alphonso struck his foot against something hard: he took

it up: 'twas a short sabre, the blade of which was rusty all over, but a large spot near the end of the edge embossed with a large raised incrustation of rust—Take that, said the Baron to Father Thomas, and keep it by you. The light of the lamp was too feeble to extend through the vault, small though it was: they therefore searched slowly along step by step, and by the dim light it afforded, took the best view they could of the place. As they went along thus round the walls, Father Thomas, who stood in the middle of the vault, imagined that he found the ground beneath him move: he struck it with his foot, and a hollow sound issued from it: he called the rest. Here is something, said he, probably worth notice. They came over, and standing in turn upon it, each found it spring beneath his feet, and heard the hollow sound.—The Baron without a word began to dig away the earth: he had not removed half a foot in depth when he found a board. They all immediately assisted him, and the earth was removed from a bed of plank of several feet in surface: they tore it up, and beneath found a chest in which was deposited a skeleton, the flesh of which was quite mouldered away. It was obviously that of a man of extraordinary stature. The Baron touched it, and it sunk beneath his hand: he hung over it for some time—Is there

not another, said he, along with it? They moved the earth about it, but there was none. They then turned to the chest again: the priest took the skull, which was not quite dislevered from the trunk till he stirred it, and attentively viewing it he perceived that it was cloven across behind. The Baron looking wistfully at it, and shewing it to Don Isidor, asked him rather sternly, if he recollected any thing about a dream—Don Isidor bowed in humble acknowledgment—The Priest, whose curiosity on this occasion seemed greatest and most observant, felt round the chest, inspected the bones, the clothes, and every part of it—at length, Here, said he, is somewhat more than flesh and bones.—It was a seal ring. He presented it to the Baron, who looking at it attentively for some time exclaimed, O God! then handing it over to Don Isidor, said, Dost thou know this device? What say reason and scepticism now?—Don Isidor looked, started, breathed short—Do I know it?—Yes, on my soul this is the ring of Gonsalvo: here is his device too, a hand and dagger, with *Instar Fulminis* his motto—Well, Don Isidor, said the Baron, are you now convinced?

Although this be sufficient to convince me, returned Don Isidor, I think we should leave no means untried to obtain every testimony this place

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can afford ; let us search further.—I intend it, said the Baron.—He accordingly led them again, beginning at the door, round by the wall, viewing with closest inspection the ground, and stamping upon it to find whether it was hollow.—At length they came to a heap, as they thought, of earth ; the Baron struck it with his foot, a helmet and coat of mail rolled about the floor—The Baron took up one part, Don Isidor another. It is the armour of a giant rather than a common man, said the Priest—It was my son's, said the Baron. Father, lend me your knife.—He took the knife and scraped away the rust : Behold, said he, our family device, and here read. They read aloud, *Instar Fulminis*—Yes, yes, my child ! said the Baron vehemently ; a thunderbolt thou wert to thy enemies, but treachery beguiled and deprived thee of thy precious life ; and now that arm, which carried terror to the enemies of Castile and victory to its banners, is fallen to a clod of the valley.—Here the Baron's anguish, like a stream long stopped in its course, burst in a torrent of tears and groans, which seemed to shake the arches of the vault : for some time he was silent : at length turning to Don Isidor and Father Thomas, he said, Lay them as they were till all is ripe, and then shall the arms of Rayo burst like a thunderbolt upon the devoted
heads

heads of the guilty. Let us proceed. They then went further, and found a leathern portmanteau, much decayed, and full of insects: the Baron strove to open it; it broke in pieces, and a silver-hafted dagger with the aforesaid crest, a crucifix studded with rubies, and some papers fell out of it upon the ground. The Baron searched it further, and in a private flap of it found a number of papers. Those papers, said he, reverend Father, together with this cross and dagger, and the ring, we confide to you, requesting that you will seal them up—And you, Don Isidor, will witness the transaction, till justice calls them forth. They reckoned the papers, Don Isidor and Alphonso writing their names on each, and the priest took possession of them.

Although no more be necessary now, and it draws fast towards morning, said the Baron, let us leave nothing unexamined. They searched round with the most scrupulous exactness—not a spot, not a flaw in the floor or the walls that they did not examine. While they were thus engaged, the young Alphonso, who was walking to and fro, busied in contemplating the scene before him, and felicitating himself with the thoughts that he had contributed to the disclosure of such a horrid affair, struck the hilt of his sword against a part of

the wall, which sounded very hollow, and apprised them of it. They brought the lamp.—Assuredly, said the Baron, my daughter was not spared—perhaps there may be another depository of the dead here.—They knocked at the wall—felt it, examined it, and the more they advanced in a particular direction, the more hollow it sounded.—At last they touched a door so neatly fitted that it seemed to be a part of the wall, but crevice or joint they could discover none : determined, however, not to leave it unaccomplished, they persisted ; the priest scraping and probing with his knife, and the Baron with his sword, while Alphonso looking lower discovered a key-hole.—Let us cut it here, said the priest.—Hold, said the Baron—for this perhaps our Alphonso has already found a key. Then taking forth that which Alphonso had found in pursuance of the monition in the dream, he tried it, and the lock flew open. Here, said the Baron, let us look with humble adoration to the Great Disposer of events—and henceforth let wonder cease—“His ways are in the great deep, and not to be searched out :” yet man, puny creature, and arrogant as puny, will estimate heavenly things by earthly calculations, and doubt of the extent of the power of the Almighty, only because his feeble reason cannot comprehend it.

Just

Just as he was opening the door, Father Thomas stopped him.—Hold! said he, we go on without considering how many hours have elapsed since we entered into those buildings. Morning approaches—I fear that day has already dawned—discovery might ruin all—therefore let us begone. You say well, said Don Isidor, it must be day-break. Alas! said the Baron, much remains behind—and shall we go?—then pausing—Yet it must be.

Were I permitted to advise, said Don Isidor, we should immediately depart, carefully laying every thing in such a manner as, if searched, to baffle suspicion. They accordingly covered up the chest with the earth; Father Thomas devoutly pronouncing the *Las Animas* over it. They then closed the door of the vault, proceeded next to the steps up to the chapel; where closing the door, and laying down the large stone, they put the whole, as nearly as they could, in its former state, and departed.

CHAP. X.

THEY arrived at the bower just as distant objects were rendered visible by the increasing light of the morning ; there they found their attendants anxiously expecting their arrival, having suffered much from apprehension as well as cold. Every thing now, however, tended to cheer and repay them for the hardships of the night. The rising sun by degrees chased away the cold, and rendered the air most exquisitely refreshing. Ten thousand birds filled the air with the harmony of nature ; from the distant hills was heard incessantly the bleating of flocks innumerable, while the goatherds' pipe, and now and then the barking of their dogs, broke in occasionally, and finished the picture of this new Arcadia.

After having refreshed themselves with some bread and wine which they had brought with them, they mounted, and set forward towards
Burgos,

Burgos, repassing the river. The Baron mused for some time ; at last breaking silence, and turning to the others behind him, Behold, said he, how magnificently the hand of the Creator has furnished the abodes of all his creatures ! Not all the embellishments of art, strained to the last nerve of human skill, not all the proud domes, raised story over story by the aspiring hand of architecture, not gilded cielings, burnished arches, columns of polished marble, gold or silver moulded by the hand of taste and inscribed with the proud emblems of nobility, can be put in comparison with this one small speck in the works of Omnipotence : nay, let but the hand of art touch it, and its beauties vanish !—Hark ! every throat of the pretty feathered tribe swelled instinctively with notes of grateful adoration ! The flocks bleat forth their praise—the noble ox, his appetite and mere corporeal functions all suspended in mute devotion, contemplates the beauties that surround him, heaves his huge sides with rapture, and in enjoyment pays his tribute to the hand that feeds him ! Man, only man, swollen with the pride of reason (that dubious instrument, by Heaven given, his blessing or his curse), becomes the bubble of creation—sinfully spurns from him gifts like those, and

to his own gaudy perishable works resorts for satisfaction—worse ! strains his prolific mind for means to desolate the face of fair creation—for spurious pleasures, which baffle in pursuit or poison in enjoyment, wages inexorable war against the will of Heaven, spreads his own brother's couch with serpents' teeth—ravages—ruins—murders !——

Just as he had pronounced those last words, they came to a beautiful recess, resembling a stage formed by the hand of nature, at the foot of the mountain; round it the hills rose in a gentle slope like the seats of an amphitheatre, and in the centre of it stood a large stone cross; the whole was surrounded by a prattling rivulet, which fell from the hills behind in a beautiful cataract; at the bottom, separating into two branches, glided round this natural stage, and meeting again below it in one stream fell into the river Guadaluiver at the distance of about a league: the whole was surrounded by stately cork trees, which lent a cool shade from the intense heat of the meridian sun. In this romantic spot was collected a crowd of men and women, dressed in all the fantastic finery of the country, and bedecked with boughs and flowers: one man, who seemed the

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chief,

chief, carried a garland in his hand, and, mated with a beautiful female, led them all in mazes through a dance. Don Isidor stopped and looked on—Nothing, said he, delights me so much as an assemblage of happy faces. The dance stopped, and the people saluted our travellers with rustic civility. Pr'ythee, said Don Isidor, what is the occasion of this mirth and dancing to-day? Is it your tutelar saint's day?

Why, you must know, Señor, that the village you see yonder is called Villaverde: it has been in the possession of the present family ever since the expulsion of the Moors from this part of Spain: and if the blessed Virgin condescends to hear the prayers of its inhabitants, it will continue so for ever—for never were people so blessed as they are in a lord, and never was a family so blessed in return as they—if good works, the prayers of mankind, the smiles of heaven, and being true Christians and real hidalgos can make them so. Search out the best man in Spain, and we will set the worst of this family against him, and not be afraid of the comparison; and of all of them that ever possessed the estate, the present Marquis seems the best; for, to the natural greatness of his blood, and the hereditary goodness of his heart, he unites the gifts of his good uncle Jerome, prior
of

of our convent, under whose care he was bred : you need not doubt then his being a good Christian, which you know is saying every thing. As soon as he came of age, instead of lavishing the great wealth he got into possession of, in feasts and revels and riot, in horses, dice, cards, or women, he laid it all out in charity, reserving to himself no more for his expences than the poorest hidalgo in the country : he provides for the old and infirm, gives instruments of husbandry to young farmers, and tools to young tradesmen : he gives portions to young maids to procure them good husbands, and on their marriage supplies them with a capital to set them going : not a person in the country but can bear testimony to his charity : even the little children flock about him as he walks the streets, skipping for joy like young lambkins after their dams, and get their quarto or ochavo to regale : in short, Sir, nothing, not even the brute creation fails to find tender protection and shelter from him * :—he is splendid in gifts to the church to pray for the dead, but he is chiefly applauded for his munificence to poor hidalgos whose families have fallen by mischance

* This is exactly the character of the present Marquis of Villaverde, at least of him who lived in 1781.

or error into poverty—All men adore him—and the Almighty has marked him for his own. Well, Sir, this day he is to be married—the whole neighbourhood is in one tumult of joy—grantees come from all parts of the country; even the Marquis de Punalada, who has lived like a hermit since the death of his wife, comes forth to add to the meeting: all strangers passing by are invited; and the Marquis and his uncle will both be much pleased, and think it a great favour, if you, cavaliers, would delay your journey, and go to the castle of Villaverde.

That is impossible, said Don Isidor; business of consequence obliges us to return with haste; we wish the worthy Marquis all the felicity such virtues merit, and will offer up our prayers to the Virgin to bless his nuptials. However, I thank you for the pains you have taken to inform me, and request that you will accept this—giving him a piece of money—and make merry with it on another occasion. Then turning their horses they proceeded on their journey.

They had not gone far when they observed an inn which stood just at the point of two roads: here they resolved to refresh themselves after the fatigues and fasting of the night: they accordingly stopped, and having retired into a private room

held

held a conference on the subject of the night's adventures. From what we have seen, said the Baron, no doubt remains of the truth of my suspicions: that Gonsalvo has been murdered most foully, is certain—that the skeleton in the chest is his, the ring is sufficient proof; not to mention (looking at Don Isidor) the cloven skull, the portmanteau, and the armour; and that the Marquis de Punalada has been the murderer, is little less a matter of certainty. They all assented to those propositions: the questions then to be resolved are—First, how it has happened that the Priory should be made the scene of slaughter—a place as one would think too holy for such deeds of darkness; next, what provocation or inducement brought on the murder; and lastly, what has been the fate of my daughter? All these things remaining still in obscurity, makes me wish to return to-night to the vault—perhaps we may discover further.

In my opinion, said Don Isidor, the development of all you mention hangs entirely on the discoveries we have already made. Instead therefore of making an unavailing journey to the vault, we should, in pursuance of our first plan, proceed to court, and give the king a full and circumstantial relation of the facts from the beginning.

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And desire him, said the Baron, to open the lifts, and permit me to call the villain to a public vindication of himself in single combat. I think that you mistake me yet, interrupted Don Isidor—Single combat indeed!—No, far be it from me to think of staining the noble warrior's sword with the blood of a murderer!—No, let justice—

Hear me, Don Isidor, interrupted the Baron—hear my fixed resolves—He must fall by this arm—I cannot become an assassin or an executioner—therefore I must fight him—fear not thou the event—in such a cause, a pigmy's arm would wrest victory from a giant: besides—but thou thinkest that I am old—too old to—It may be so—but know, Isidor, that even at this age, that man bears not arms in Spain from whose crest Rayo would not now, even now, old though he be, hope to pluck the laurel.

My dear Baron, returned Don Isidor, I must say you still mistake me. Of the event of a combat I have no doubt; and if, as you seem to surmise, I had any that arose from an apprehension of your age, I should, and I hope you believe it, myself step forward as the champion of our cause. The process you propose would smother future discovery, and many things of greatest moment, perhaps even your daughter's life (for who knows
but

but she yet may live?) might all be lost in this one rash act.—Consider, Baron, it is not a mere point of honour you have to discharge—it is not a doubtful claim on justice you have to enforce—you are not so destitute of proof as to resort to the sword—no, your proofs are already in your reach, and justice to your whole family demands that your oppressor should be brought, not to the honourable issue of the sword, but to the ignominious sentence of the law. As to your age, Baron, it has nothing to do with it; for, in a case where the demands of honour called forth the sword, I know not the hand more fit to draw it than yours—If it failed, and mine should sink after it, remember that I have a son.—Ay, Isidor, you have a son—such a son as I once had—one to whose arm the fate of empires might be trusted; but believe me, you have shaken my intentions for the present. My daughter may live, said you not so? Look you, Isidor, accustomed as thou hast been to read my heart, which ever has been written in my actions, thou canst not but have observed how much more precious than life, nay than ten thousand lives, has honour ever been in my opinion; yet would I, to make good that one transporting hope—to save my daughter—to hug her once more in these arms—give life, fame, fortune,

fortune, every thing to the winds; forego all honours, all worldly hopes, and take the fate of the most forlorn wretch that draws existence from the pity of mankind——But it may not be—she must be gone—she was not spared!

However, said Don Isidor, though unlikely, it is not impossible: is it not better to proceed by such temperate means as may insure our work at least from further mischief? I say then, we must desire the interference of the king, and even this must be done with caution, for Don Rodrigo is nephew and presumptive heir to the Marquis; and his mother, who is above all women crafty, may by circumspection discover, and by address defeat us. My advice therefore is, that we repair to Burgos, and that Alphonso gain a private audience of the king, and prevail upon him to grant you a hearing, in which case there does not remain a doubt of justice being done.

Father Thomas and Alphonso added the weight of their opinion to this advice, and the Baron agreed. Meantime, said Don Isidor, let us take some refreshment, remain here this night to rest, and early to-morrow set forward on our journey.

Just at that moment, they observed from their windows a cloud of dust arising at a distance,
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and moving towards them; they soon heard the trampling of horses, and presently saw a carriage drawn by six mules, and surrounded by armed men; it drove by the inn, and turned towards the town of Villaverde. They called their host, and asked him whose it was: he answered, that it was the Marquis de Punalada, who for a wonder, said he, appears abroad, going I suppose to the wedding: ay, ay, he has armed men enough to keep off the ghosts.—Oh Lord save us, and keep us a clear conscience!

This Marquis then, said Don Isidor, is much afraid of ghosts, is he? Afraid, Señor! Why, he is the talk of the whole country, replied the host; we have sometimes such work with him—it was but a few nights ago he called up all the servants in the middle of the night—said that some one was going to kill him—made them arm themselves, and search all round the castle—and at last could not be persuaded but that some person had come to him as he lay in bed, and shook a bloody poniard over him, threatening him with speedy death: he keeps almost continually locked up in private places, and never walks even in the great gardens, though walled with battlements, without two chosen domestics. Sometimes he disappears for days together, and is not seen by any
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one, and the people of the castle think that he is then with Father Gregorio the prior—though how he gets there they cannot tell, as the walls of the castle are between them. Be this as it will, one of the lay-brothers saw him once in the prior's cell, at a time that he had not passed the gate. Some say that he deals with the devil—some say one thing, some say another—some talk of my lady's death—but as for me, Señors, remember, I say nothing: besides, now I think on it, you are strangers to me, and might do me a mischief; but thank God I can keep a secret. We, returned Don Isidor, we are above doing you a mischief, and hope you will not think so ill of us; so, if you have a secret—Lord! no, your honour, no secret—what every one knows is no secret—Why he screeches, and talks to himself, and says the wickedest things when he thinks that no one is in hearing—such as that God cannot pardon him, and the like—Despair you know is one of the seven deadly sins—as for my part, I would not take the wealth of Spain to be in his skin this night; for though I do keep an inn, I am an honest man, and never committed murder. Murder! exclaimed Don Isidor—why, did the Marquis? No, no, your honour—oh no—not as one would say—God forbid I should say so—but then

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when a man is afraid of his own shadow, and shrieks—I understand you, said Don Isidor, touching his lips with his fingers, by way of denoting silence—You are a wise fellow, and I commend you.

But, Señores, continued the host quite flattered, only think of his immuring his daughter, a sweet young lady, in a cell of a convent, only out of fear of a prophecy of a cursed witch—But that cost his son his life, who was—but, God forgive him! he is dead. Then there is a poor youth he has bred up for charity: some say he is his own bastard—but I cannot believe it, he is too good for that: be that as it may, he treats him cruelly. Sometimes when he meets him he screeches, and orders him to be turned out, then again sends and has him brought back, for the lad would be glad to go: and would you believe it? one day about four days ago he was missed; messengers were sent to search for him; they found him in a broken building behind the convent, where he was looking for birds' nests: and only think, the Marquis was going to poniard him, and at last laid him in irons, calling him villain, cut-throat, traitor!—Lord help us! the boy would not cut the throat of a chicken, though he wanted his dinner by it: not but the fellow is brave enough, and now that
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he's grown is as strong as a mule. It is not six months ago since a great gang of robbers descended from the Sierra Morena, and plundered the whole country, carrying away every thing, cattle, corn and all. The Marquis was then abroad, that is to say, buried in his castle: what does the young Fernando, but claps on a suit of armour, and at the head of a few peasants sallied forth, attacked the banditti, took their chief, and kept him hostage at a small village till all they had remaining of the stolen property was restored! The Marquis being informed of it, sent to have the fellow detained just as all was returned: but Fernando said that he had already passed his word, and would send his spear through any one that should presume to detain him; adding, that it was better to have the things restored to their poor owners, than to hang such a worthless wretch; and then dismissed him with an earnest exhortation to reformation and repentance. All people were astonished at the grandeur of his sentiments, particularly as he was a foundling, and, as the saying is, begot in sin:—but as soon as he went home the Marquis became outrageous, threatened him with death, laid him in irons, and kept him on bread and water for a month. When let at liberty, he walked about sad and silent, and spoke to no

one. One day sauntering down a long lobby in the castle, the Marquis suddenly opened a room door just facing him, screeched, and almost fell into fits at the sight of him. The castle was alarmed: his lordship declared that he was watching there to assassinate him: the youth called Heaven to witness his innocence, and begged that he might be permitted to withdraw from the castle, and ease his lordship's mind, who seemed to abhor the sight of him: assuring him that, though grateful for past favours, he was weary of such continual ill usage; upon which the Marquis swore he should never go outside the walls of the castle, and gave orders for his being strictly watched. Ever since he remains there as it were a prisoner—he is seen sometimes walking on the battlements attended by two men as guards—no one can tell the cause of this, but every one knows it can be nothing good.

You interest me much in the fate of this youth, said Don Isidor; and your account astonishes me beyond measure. There is something in the Marquis's conduct to him so far surpassing the bounds of common malignity, that, coupled with his terrors and screechings, denotes some guilty mystery.

Why, Señor, said the innkeeper, he seems almost as much afraid of every body—nay, for
matter

matter of that, of himself; for he cannot abide to be alone at night. Indeed most of the domestics are terrified at night, and declare that the whole castle and its gardens, nay, the whole priory and valley, are haunted. Well, thank God, the Marquis of Villa-verde is my lord! I would not be under the other for—for—for—no no, not for— Here he was called, and obliged to leave his company, and his story unfinished.

A strange account this! said Don Isidor.

A very natural one, said the Baron. Though guilt bury itself in the unfathomable abysses of the deep, it cannot fly from that awful tribunal erected for its punishment in the heart of the offender—I mean the conscience, all powerful conscience, which can smoothe the rude front of adversity, and turn the hard couch of poverty into a bed of down, or goad the guilty wretch of state with stings and tortures; convert to gall the sweets which nature pours into his cup; 'midst hosts of slaves that bend at his nod, appall him with menaces of vengeance, paint to his panic-stricken soul a dagger pointed to his throat by every hand, and give him even here a foretaste of perdition. ! Gracious Heaven! what infatuation! that man, so oft, so awfully admonished, will not reflect—but, for the shadow of some transitory pleasure, the substance

of which flies but the farther from his grasp, at once render this life too hideous to be borne, and preclude his wretched soul from shelter in another!

I cannot account for it, said Don Isidor, but I feel a propensity which I cannot overcome, to go towards the castle and take a view of it. The unmerited fate of that youth, who from our host's account seems to have something noble in his soul, fills me with, I cannot say how, an ardent wish to see him. Were I superstitious, I should deem those desires predictive—Perhaps! nay it cannot be—What? said the Baron hastily.

In truth, replied Don Isidor, my thoughts were so absurd that I almost blush to own them. If this should be your orphan grandson!—A flush of red crimsoned the cheek of the Baron—What! if it should—but oh it cannot be—why keep him there? And yet his jealous apprehensions, his shrieks of horror—but it cannot be—No, Isidor! no, when he had gone so deep in guilt as to murder the father and mother, he would not stop at the child: much less would he keep him as a continual memento of his guilt—No, no, it cannot be, it cannot be! The will of Heaven be done! To it I will (I trust, with fortitude) submit; and, when the debt of vengeance to my murdered children is paid, bury if I can all remembrance of them
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in their grave, and look upon Alphonso as my child, the kindly gift of the Supreme to smoothe the down-hill path of my declining years.

Yet, said Don Isidor, suppose we go? It can do no injury, and will at least give us a more perfect idea of the situation of the castle, to serve us on a future occasion.

I agree, replied the Baron: let us go.

As soon as they had dined, they departed for the castle: as they approached it they saw, or thought they saw, the country become more gloomy; and their imagination, influenced by their opinion of the Marquis, viewed it as a place cut off from the goods of Providence, where grass grew not, and where the affrighted earth drew back into her womb her natural produce, as fearful to trust it to the hands of such a monster. They rode along the walls, and perceived that they were strongly intrenched behind a deep ditch, over which as they advanced they found a draw-bridge drawn up: passing further on, they observed that the wall turned to the southward, and continuing their route along it saw that it joined that of the priory. They turned back again, and as they approached the draw-bridge observed three men walking on the wall: on their nearer approach, Don Isidor courteously saluting them inquired to

whom that noble castle belonged. One of them returned the salute, and informed him that it belonged to the Marquis de Punalada; that the Marquis was from home: and said, that he was sorry the arrangements of the castle forbad him from inviting them during the Marquis's absence. Our travellers had not the smallest doubt, from the youthful voice and manner of the speaker, but that he was the young person of whom such honourable mention had been made by the inn-keeper: Don Isidor therefore accosted him. Young gentleman, said he, though I should be sorry to break in upon the arrangements or trespass on the privileges of the castle, I cannot help entreating that you would have the goodness to direct us in the road to Cordova, from which, I know not how, we have insensibly diverged; and as the roads about here are rather intricately crossed and mixed with each other, you would considerably augment the favour by descending, and instructing us particularly how we may avoid going again astray. We are travellers, and, like all travellers who hope to profit by their toil, wish to get the best account possible of the country which we pass through; and here have been unable to find any but uncouth and ignorant peasants, incapable of instructing us. You honour me much, returned the youth, by your invitation,

invitation, but there are reasons why I cannot avail myself of it. Just as he said this, one of the men who was along with him spoke to him in a whisper—the three consulted together, and then making a sign to Don Isidor to wait, they descended, and letting down the draw-bridge passed over. The young man stepped forward and joined the Baron and Don Isidor. As he approached, the whole company riveted their eyes upon him, and were much pleased and indeed surprised at the dignity of his mien, the firmness of his deportment, the vigour of his limbs, and the noble manly expression of his countenance, in which strong character was deeply marked. The Baron felt a lively emotion of tenderness towards him—Don Isidor not less—while Father Thomas had all those sensations that a good heart meliorated by Christianity may be supposed to feel for virtue groaning under oppression. They dismounted from their horses, and leaving them to the care of the servants walked aside with him. He began to speak—but an unaccountable sensation broke his utterance, and alternately overspread his face with a shifting red and white: however, he informed them that this was the castle of Punalada, as he had said before, and that it was surrounded with walls a considerable length backwards, even to
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the ground of the convent of Vallesanto; that the Marquis was a man of immense estates and great wealth, highly favoured by the court, but yet so fond of retirement that he chose rather to live here for many years past, than go into the world and assume that figure in it which his rank and fortune entitled him to. You are his son then, I presume? said Don Isidor. No, Sir; I am indeed the creature of his adoption, preserved by his charity, and now supported by his bounty; but whose son I am, alas! I know not, nor perhaps shall ever know; at present the Marquis by his adoption is entitled to all those duties which I should pay to my natural parents, perhaps to more. Then you are happy? said the Baron. The youth hesitated—at length, If, said he, I answer in the negative, let me be acquitted of any intentional ingratitude to my protector. I have never gone so far before, and I confess I am astonished to think by what irresistible power your notice of me exacts a confession which I have never made to any one. The Marquis has been kind to me—I owe him every thing, yet am not happy. Why, my child? said the Baron earnestly. I wish, replied the youth, to serve my king, and be a soldier; but I am not permitted: the Marquis (for what reason I cannot tell) is averse to it—it is his will I should not go, and I must

must submit.—Apprehending, as I suppose, that I have formed a design to depart for that purpose, without his permission, he has ordered me to keep within the walls of the castle, and assigned me a guard: but he need not; I think obedience to his will a duty, and no earthly consideration shall make me guilty of a breach of it. Nothing could equal their astonishment at the noble sentiments and ingenuous spirit of so young a man. The Baron gazed upon him as if his eyes had lost their wonted motion—Don Hidor took him by the hand, pressed it, and said—Unhappy parents, whoever they are, to have lost such a son; and happy he who has acquired such a one, even by adoption!

The Marquis, interrupted the Baron, must be sensible of the treasure he possesses—He is fond of you, my child, is he not? Alas, venerable Sir! replied the youth, he on the contrary seems to abhor me, and (why, I know not) to consider me as a person unworthy of trust or confidence—as a villain—as a traitor. Here his colour shifted to a deadly pale, and a tear gushed in spite of him from his eyes, while every muscle of his face seemed agitated. In short, Sirs, continued he, to be plain, the Marquis has of late so treated me, that every tie of affection is broken, and the only

ligament

ligament which now remains to bind me to him is gratitude; a bond which no true Christian can break. I trust that God will grant me the grace never to violate it. Thus have I, Señors, seduced by an unaccountable feeling which draws me to you with resistless force, deviated from my accustomed maxims of silence. To have at once proposed in you the secret of my heart appears now strange to myself—yet does it not give me one painful sensation; on the contrary, I feel more tranquil at heart than I have for a long, long time been.

Fear not, excellent young man! said Don Isidor: you speak to men of honour; nay more, you speak to those who feel their hearts entwined with yours in the reciprocal folds of affection, equally strong as yours—equally unaccountable to themselves.

Let us, said the Baron, call you child: if affection entitles to that appellation, we claim a stronger right than the Marquis.

And at all events, said Don Isidor, remember that if the caprice of the Marquis, his death, or any other circumstance, should leave you at liberty to make a choice, Don Isidor de Haro will be ready to take upon him the office of the father and the friend; and will discharge both to you as though you were the issue of his own loins.

Don

Don Isidor, you would engross all to yourself, said the Baron; you must allow the claim of the childless to be paramount to yours, and such is mine. My child, for I will call you so, said he, I am old, and can instruct you; therefore hear me attentively: hope not that time, reason, or moral or religious sentiment can work any change in the Marquis's heart in thy favour. To use the helpless orphan of his protection with inhumanity, and put bonds upon his mind and person, shews him to possess a soul either naturally depraved, or labouring under some malignant suspicion or hidden animosity which broods in his heart, but dares not appear: and trust me, youth, man in intercourse with man seldom rests at the first stage of good or evil; but where he confers an unmerited benefit, or offers an unprovoked injury, carries the folly of the one act, or the wickedness of the other, to extremes.—Never did I know a man that did not delight in fostering the worst brier that he had planted; never do I remember a man who could forgive the innocent he had injured. Let this be your caution, this the guide of your conscience: that gratitude, which has outlived affection, is a mere religious duty, and, like that of forgiveness of our enemies, extends not to self-injury, involves no positive esteem, enjoins no positive attachment,

tachment, but merely bids that we pray for and wish rather good than evil to its object. In this am I right, Father? said he, turning to the priest. Perfectly, returned Father Thomas. One word more, said the Baron, taking him by the hand : Fly this castle, as you value life, or wish for the protection of Heaven—guilt saps its walls, vengeance holds its sword over it, and the thunder of Heaven ere many days be past will shake it to its foundation.—Fly, therefore—quickly fly—and when once thy resolution shall be taken, let this (giving him a scrap of paper) be thy guide.

The youth looked with astonishment at the Baron as he spoke—he was overawed by the dignity of his looks, while the words he spoke sunk to the inmost recesses of his soul. Don Isidor, continued the Baron, we must have this youth between us ; for as of Alphonso, so of him, neither of us will give up his share. And you, said he, my children, taking both their hands and putting them into each other, remember, that after this day, if ever you should happen to meet, you meet as brothers. With joy, said Alphonso, I accept from your hands that which was before denied to me—a brother. And I, said Fernando, with gratitude for the acquisition, earnestly hope that I may be worthy of it.

At this instant, one of the servants called out, Don Fernando, it is time to return; you know what would be the consequence if we were detected here. I shall return directly, said Fernando. Then turning to the Baron and Don Isidor, Your advice, Señors, is engraven on my heart; and if I should fail in persuading the Marquis to let me forth, depend upon it I shall take a proper opportunity to claim your protection: meantime may Heaven protect you, and grant you all the happiness you deserve! Reverend Father, said he, turning then to the priest, your blessing.—God bless you, my son! said the priest. And now, my brother, since you allow me to call you so, said he to Alphonso, let us embrace and part. He then turned from them, called his attendants, and tripping over the draw-bridge hauled it up, waved his hand as a last adieu, and disappeared.

Our travellers had not gone far from the castle, the Baron ever and anon tossing up his eyes to heaven and groaning, and Don Isidor in mute contemplation—when Pierrot, touching Alphonso on the arm, and making him one of his significant becks to drop behind, says, in a low tone of voice, his eyes staring, his mouth round as a circle, and his brows lifted up in astonishment, Answer me, Señor, only two questions which I shall put to you—

you—Is this country all enchanted, or is it not? that is one? And who, tell me, who do you think that young cavalier is like? that is another. Let me see whether we be all bewitched, or whether it is me alone that the devil plays his pranks with. And is this, said Alphonso, the cause of your important beckon to me to fall behind with you? To what end tend those two ridiculous questions?

I'll tell you what, Señor, if you were to hang or burn me, I cannot but think that I am bewitched—for, when that youth appeared, and I first saw him, I wiped my eyes again and again—and I doubted whether I was awake—But to the very last I was bewitched; for, if I was not, how could he appear to me to be my master Don Isidor?

Why, Pierrot, said Alphonso, looking earnestly in his face, are you out of your senses? What strange notion is now running in your precious noddle?

May I never live, replied Pierrot, if that young cavalier did not seem to me to be the very same man that carried away my lady, your mother, from her father's, near Talavera—that married her—that afterwards begat you—and that is now there riding before us! Nay, your honour need not stare, for to be sure it is all bewitchment and sorcery;
for

for there is nothing about us here but conjurers, magicians, spirits, and witches, and I wish we were well out of it: nay, for matter of that, I did not like your embracing the young fellow, who, for ought we know, may be something bad, and has taken upon him that handsome shape only to hurt and deceive us: indeed, indeed, we ought to turn back, and not go the road he directed us.

Alphonso, seriously alarmed, spurred his horse and rode up to the others, and in terms of affection and tenderness deplored the insanity of Pierrot, told them the whole of what had passed, and besought them to examine him. Did I not tell you, said the Baron to Don Isidor; never did I see so strong a resemblance—that of this youth to Gonfalso is not greater than that of Fernando to you. It is a strange mysterious business—would that we could get to the bottom of it!

C H A P. XI

AS soon as they arrived at the city of Burgos, the Baron, Don Isidor, Father Thomas, and their attendants, remained at an inn, while Alphonso went to court. He first made it his business to see his patron, Don Juan de Padilla, and besought him to obtain for him a private audience of the king, to whom, he said, he should, in his presence, unfold a business no less surprising than horrible. The king, not less inclined to oblige his minister than to serve his favourite, instantly granted him the audience, in presence of Don Juan. Alphonso began by entreating his majesty to believe, that nothing less than a business of the most serious moment could induce him to call upon his majesty's attention in so very serious and urgent a manner.—He plighted himself to prove, to the conviction of the world, one of the most execrable conspiracies that ever was conceived by man in his most abandoned wickedness—a conspiracy formed

formed against the honour, the fortunes, and the lives, of a house distinguished in the service of the crown of Castile—carried into effect—concealed for many years, and at length discovered by means more than ordinary—by the intervention of the avenging hand of Heaven. He said, that the affair was so intricate, so dependent on a variety of proofs, and so very difficult of explanation, that it would be necessary, as well for his majesty's case as for the more perfect elucidation of it, to have the principal personages of it before his majesty: and he earnestly entreated to have the liberty of bringing them on the morrow in attendance before him: one of them was Don Isidor, his father; another, the Reverend Father Thomas Augustino; the third, Baron de Rayo.—How! said Don Juan, Baron de Rayo! Has he not been dead, his estates confiscated, and his titles extinct? That the Baron's estates were confiscated, and his blood attainted by Peter, said Alphonso, is too true; but it is equally true that he lives, and that the attainder was taken off by our late king Henry. The conspiracy and consequent frauds and murder that led to that—How—murder! exclaimed the king. Even so, my liege—most foul murder, perhaps worse, returned Alphonso: I say, and I undertake at the hazard

of my life, and, what I value more, your majesty's favour, to prove that the house of Rayo has sunk beneath the hands of a villain and a murderer!

— This is strong language! said the king.

— It is my liege, said Don Juan, and such as I presume Alphonso, ere he uttered it, was prepared to make good.

— Then what is the scope of your present demand? said the king.

— That the persons I have named be permitted, on the morrow, to come before your majesty, in presence of Don Juan, and such other persons as your majesty may think fit, there to lay before you the whole of this transaction.

— I grant it, said the king.

— May your faithful servant, said Alphonso, presume to suggest the necessity of secrecy for the present; Don Rodrigo is nearly concerned in the event, though not in the guilt.

— Enough, said the king—To-morrow morning at ten o'clock, I will, for greater caution, be at Don Juan's house; there we will hear of this extraordinary affair.

— On the morning, Alphonso, attended by Don Isidor, the Baron, and Father Thomas, repaired to Don Juan's, who received them all with every mark of esteem, and particularly treated the Baron
with

with distinguished respect: they discoursed upon the business in hand, and Don Juan assured them of the king's resolution to render justice to the Baron.

At the appointed time the king came, and with him the corregidor of Burgos. The king desired Alphonso to proceed. Alphonso entreated that the Baron de Rayo might be permitted to explain the nature of the case. The Baron began from the very commencement, and after deprecating the imputation of egotism, if he spoke of himself, which the nature of the case demanded, gave a detail of the services of himself and his family to the state; relating various victories which had been acknowledged by the reigning kings to have been gained over the enemies of the faith and state, by his valour and wisdom; for a proof of all which he referred to existing records, and living evidence. He then described the heroism and achievements of his son; and drew a picture of the sufferings of him and his daughter, which affected the king extremely: he then adverted to his own miseries—his imprisonment—wanderings—wants—and finally his reception by Don Isidor.

Here Alphonso took up the affair, with an account of the incidents at Vallesanto.

Don Isidor then began with the story of the

search—and lastly, Father Thomas produced the ring, sabre, crucifix, and dagger, and the papers found in the portmanteau, sealed up; all of which they jointly and severally swore to.

Don Juan was astonished.—He said, that the leading circumstances of the tale tallied exactly with facts in his recollection. He was intimate with Gonfalvo—knew his device—believed it was his ring—would certainly know his armour, as they had often fought together—and he particularly recollected, that the Marquis de Punalada suddenly retired from court soon after the disappearance of Gonfalvo.

From the letters, which were almost fallen to pieces, were collected the following sentences.

LETTER I.

“You have not an hour to lose, Gonfalvo—Padre Pablo will tell you all—Haste you away—a moment’s delay may put your wife beyond your power—in the embraces of the K——.”

LETTER II.

[Opened the second, but probably the first in point of date.]

“There is a convent, with the prior of which I have some power—two of my domestics will attend

attend you there—no other place affords you a sanctuary against the disappointed lust of P— (meaning Peter)."

LETTER III.

"Leave it to me to develop the affair to the Baron.—All your property, papers, &c. I will secure for you. Depend on the continuation of my good offices."

Here the corregidor demanded whether there was any mark or signature by which to ascertain who had been the writer of those letters.

My lord, said the Baron, his majesty and you will observe, that in this strange discovery, evidently made under the directing hand of Heaven, presumptive evidence is the utmost we can yet reach; the identity of the person murdered will be admitted sufficiently proved, when the ring, the armour, and the letters directed to Gonsalvo, found with the skeleton, the skull of which is split transversely, and the instrument lying in the place, are taken into consideration. The question then is, whether this proof be or be not sufficient to induce your majesty to set on foot an enquiry;

to call the Father Prior of the convent to account for that crowd of suspicious circumstances, and thence to draw more ample proof of the guilt of the accused ?

This, said the king, is certainly reasonable.

The corregidor agreed with his majesty.

Your majesty then sees, continued the Baron, that the next consideration will be, how to do this in such a manner as to prevent the cunning of those concerned from rendering the enquiry abortive : and as I have turned the whole through my mind, and have considered it with so much the more attention, as I am most concerned in the issue, I will, with your majesty's permission, suggest a plan which I trust will meet with approbation.

The corregidor desired him to explain himself.

My scheme, said the Baron, is this :—In the first place, let some of your lordship's most intelligent officers, duly authorised, proceed with us to the vaults, and there take full cognizance, and testify to your lordship in writing what shall appear to them : let this, along with the testimony of the reverend Father here, of Don Isidor, and of Don Alphonso, be made up into a record, and deposited together with the ring, armour, sabre, and letters, in the archives of your court ; on this your majesty

jeſty will ground an order for the arreſt of all parties ſuſpected; and in the execution of this, care muſt be taken to prevent any impediments, by colluſion or otherwiſe, being thrown in the way of juſtice. To this end, while one armed force ſurrounds the caſtle of Punalada on one ſide, and another the priory on the other, we, with a choſen few of your majeſty's appointment, will enter the vault by the private paſſage and be ready to receive any one that might enter it through the caſtle. I have many reaſons for expecting, from the execution of this plan, much ſucceſs, ſeeing that the ſudden concuſſion of unexpected fear, has often ſhaken from the ſoul of a hardened ſinner, a guilty ſecret, which the deliberate operations of juſtice, nay torture itſelf, could not wring from him.

The corregidor then declared, that notwithſtanding the miraculous tenor of the whole tranſaction, every thing which had fallen from the Baron carried ſo much the ſterling weight of truth, as, joined with the evidence, and his and the other witneſſes known integrity, ſerved to bear down all doubt of his ſincerity; and he entirely approved of his plan for facilitating a full diſcovery, and enſuring juſtice: and in concluſion
added,

added, that he would appoint a proper person to go and hold the inquest desired.

The king, on ~~the~~ part, assured the Baron, that on the proof of what he had advanced being established (of which by the by he had little doubt), every practicable reparation should be made to him and his family: for, said he, exclusive of the demand justice makes on me as a sovereign, I shall think something especially due to the friend of Alphonso.

Alphonso, penetrated with gratitude, knelt and kissed the king's hand.—Long may John live the pride and glory of Castile! exclaimed the Baron: the rest pronounced a heart-felt amen; and the king and corregidor retired.

Don Juan kept them all that day at his house, and in the evening an officer arrived with a letter from the corregidor to the Baron; he had orders to proceed directly on the inquest: they resolved to set out that night; but it was agreed that the servants should remain behind, to prevent unnecessary speculations.

C H A P. XII.

IT was just twilight when they arrived in the valley: they proceeded to the bower, where, according to a prior determination, the Baron and Don Isidor remained with the horses, while Father Thomas, the officer, and Alphonso, went to the chapel. Arrived at the mouth of the subterraneous passage, they struck a light, and found the place just as it had been left by them. The obstructions being now few, they got down without much loss of time: Alphonso soon found the little door that opened into the vault.—The officer entered crossing himself, and was smote with horror at the spectacle presented to his view.—He examined the skull—the armour—every thing—and took down an accurate account of the whole in writing. In order to establish the point of the relative situation with the convent, Father Thomas opened the cemetery, and shewed him the bodies of the deceased fathers of the convent, which he likewise

likewise exactly noted, and then again returned into the vault. Alphonso then took out the key and opened the door at which the Baron had before stopped at the suggestion of the priest.

They entered now into a long vaulted gallery, which branched off transversely on either side the door: here they stopped to deliberate which way they should turn, whether to the right branch or the left. While they were in this state of suspense, their ears were struck with the notes of soft music, which seemed to come from the extreme end of the right branch of the vaulted gallery. They paused—the music died away.—Never, said Alphonso, did I hear such ravishing sounds!—They then, with as little noise as possible, went forward:—again the music struck up, and they could distinctly hear a female voice, as sweet as that of seraphs, accompanied by a guitar—it sung by snatches the most tender, melancholy notes.—They stood and listened attentively, but could hear no distinct words. At the conclusion of a stanza it ceased, and a sigh that would have rent the knotty heart of apathy itself, and extorted pity from the remorseless savage of the woods, followed it.—Alphonso sighed responsive.

They again as cautiously as possible stepped forward,

ward, and at the end of the gallery found that it again branched off to the left.—At this instant they heard another sigh, and presently a voice, tuned by the hand of harmony itself, exclaimed : Oh blessed and most merciful redeemer ! when shall my soul take its flight, and shelter itself in thy bosom from the miseries of this life ?—They took advantage of the speaking to step forward without giving alarm, and perceived before them a glimmering light faintly break across the gallery. Alphonso, who carried the lamp, laid it down at the turning ; and they came to a door, across which near the top was cut a hole of about a foot long, and four or five inches broad, grated with small bars of iron. Father Thomas stepped forward, cautiously peeped in, and beckoned to the others to do the same. They beheld in a low gloomy chamber, which wanted nothing but height and windows to render it magnificent, a lady on her knees before a couch praying with eyes and hands devoutly uplifted to Heaven : her face, which they could distinctly see, bore every mark of dignity and beauty, but faded, and strongly impressed with the vestiges of care, thought, and affliction—Her lips ceased to move—the tears gushed in torrents from her eyes—she dropped her arms upon the couch, then sunk down
with

with her face between her hands, uttered a heart-rending sigh, and remained motionless. Alphonso's soul seemed forcing its passage through his eyes, while his heart beat so strongly as to agitate his whole frame; and he breathed short and hard. Father Thomas feared he might be heard, and drew him away—the officer continued to observe what passed within. Presently a door opened in the extreme end of the room, and he observed a large man seemingly of above the middle time of life enter; he had a lamp in one hand, and a sword in the other—The lady started, and, seeing him, arose and sat down on the couch; he joined her, and seating himself with an air of familiarity by her side, addressed her with, Always in tears!—what, shall I be ever patient only to excite fresh insult?—shall I find you still incorrigible?—and does not the apprehensions of my power yet subdue your stubborn soul?

Alas, my Lord! returned the lady, is a lapse of so many, many years spent in this dreary cell under all the miseries of anxiety and incertitude—is the resolute endurance of violence, insult and opprobrious abuse—is the firmness with which I resisted the active endeavours of your hireling priest, who betrayed his God, and used the sacred privilege of confessor to pour pernicious poison in

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my ear, and act the Pandar's part—is the fortitude with which I resigned my infant to that death with which you menaced him, rather than wrong my most beloved Lord—are my vows solemnly made and registered in Heaven—are the mortifying scorn with which I have always treated your protestations, and my contempt and hatred of your hideous person—are those fervent petitions which now for many, many years I have every hour of the undistinguished day and night wasted to Heaven with the sighs of an afflicted heart, to smite your guilty head and level it with the dust—are all those, I say, openly expressed and every day avowed, yet insufficient to correct the presumption of your heart, or convince you of the folly as well as wickedness of your hopes?—Unhappy wretch! Pity for whose weakness would counter-vail my indignation for any crimes less than yours—begone!—or if nothing will convince your senseless vanity, nor quell the fiend that works within you, but assurance sealed with blood, take my life—But oh! that would be mercy, an act above the reach of your gloomy soul—Nay, strain all your cruelty to the utmost, let all the petty vengeance of a base soul be let loose upon me, but cease to torture me with repetition of your foul polluted vows, nor insult the ashes of my murdered

murdered husband; whose arm, when living, could have crushed you into dust.

Once for all then, hear me, madam, said the man.—Here I solemnly swear—

How shalt thou swear? By what?—unhappy man, who hast already broken every tie that binds man to man, every bond that connects the creature with its creator; who hast so far outstripped all precedent of sin, as to leave your crimes without a name, and run beyond the pale even of Heaven's mercy.

If then, interrupted he, if there be yet left in Heaven's mercy one ray of hope to gleam upon my soul, may it be cut off, and consign me to utter darkness if I do not now once for all speak the irrevocable purpose of my mind—my firm, unalterable resolve—Your son, as I have already told you, convicted of treacherous designs against my castle and my life, now awaits his doom in chains.

Unhappy wretch! returned the lady—think, think! nor heap new perdition on your soul—think that all is not treachery which the coward suspicion of a guilty heart proclaims so—What! was his talking with a few armed men treachery?

Nay, interrupted the man, but he mentioned a name which shews—

What

What name? exclaimed the lady exultingly—
Oh, mother of mercy! perhaps it may—Oh if
there were a name, the very sound of which would
blast open the gates of your concealment—dart
vengeance quick as the piercing lightening
through your castle—and hurl you from your
blind security!—Even now, spite of yourself, you
betray your base fears—and (rare union of coward-
ice and rashness!) while you tremble at the lion's
roar indulge in cruel sport, and goad its young-one
in the cage.

Hear me, proud woman! interrupted the man
hastily—hear me, nor disturb me with your
raving—By that oath which I've just sworn, he
dies!—One only thing, and that you know, can
save him.

Then let him die—a son of the house of Rayo
knows how to die, but cannot know dishonour—
nor can Heaven receive a more delightful sacrifice,
than that of a virtuous son immolated at the shrine
of his parent's honour.

By Heavens, he shall die before you!

And think'st thou, monster, foolish as depraved!
that my soul, elevated by the dignity of virtue above
the common feelings of our nature, and cheered by
the all-sustaining voice of religion, can, after yield-
ing up the life of my child, stoop to tremble at the
manner of his death?—No, let it be! and draw

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from it, and from your own feelings, this instruction, that as there is no circumstance too trivial to strike terror to the heart of guilt; so there is no calamity, however horrible to man's nature, that the firm soul of virtue and religion cannot look fearless in the face, and suffer with a smile.

One week, said he rising, I allow you for deliveration: at the end of that time should'st thou remain stubborn, though my own death should go hand in hand with it, and eternal perdition wait on death, it shall be done!—Then moving to the door, and casting at her a look full of horror and fury, he said sternly, Think upon it! and withdrew.

For one week then, said the lady, I shall not be afflicted with the sight of you—Oh happy truce, worthy a rich sacrifice!

Remember, said he returning, a week!—By Heavens but a week!—and again retired.

The lady then threw herself down upon the couch, wept bitterly, and remained immoveable—The priest then withdrew and brought away the others, saying, it was probable that nature exhausted was sinking into sleep.

And who may those people be? said the officer.—Hush, said the priest, let us begone!—They returned into the vault, and shut the door after them.

—Be particular, said the priest to the officer, in noting the conversation you have just heard.

I shall, said the officer:—this armour we must bear away—it is the cortegidor's orders—the rest I can well report.

Every thing passed with the secrecy they wished: they found the Baron and Don Isidor with the horses, and mounting, were out of the valley by day-break.

As they went along, Father Thomas, in whose mind the expiration of the week appeared with all its horrors, pressed them to hasten forward, telling them in general terms, that if they were not back in a week, dreadful consequences might ensue—and as it was full four days journey to Burgos, at the common rate of travelling, it was found expedient to put their horses to the push.

The Baron could not comprehend what Father Thomas meant, nor would the latter tell him, but amused him with a story of his own fiction. The truth was, Father Thomas knowing the warm, impetuous temper of the Baron, was afraid to tell him what passed in the vault, lest it should rouse him to some act of rashness that might defeat all their projects, and had enjoined Alphonso and the officer to be silent on that head.

They arrived at Burgos on the evening of the third day ; and the urgency of the case being a sufficient excuse, the officer that night made a faithful report to the corregidor, and Don Juan hearing the whole went to the King.—They viewed the armour, and Don Juan having it cleaned in the proper places, said, he would bear witness to its being Gonfalso's. The priest then gave an exact account of the scene in the lady's chamber—The King was horror struck—Never, said he, have I heard of such accumulated guilt—The Baron was like a person bereft of his senses—he meditated—attempted to speak—paused—started—smote his breast—cast up his eyes to Heaven—groaned aloud—The King perceived his agitation, and was much affected. It must be, said the Baron at last, with difficulty getting forth his words—it must be she—it is, it is my daughter ! and that youth to whom we spoke at the castle is her son, Fernando is her son ; then turning to the King, and bending his aged knee—Oh Sire ! can thy heart, which never has known sorrow but by the name, conceive the pangs of an old man, on whose grey head it has pleased Heaven to shower down sorrows, thick as it sends the hail upon the earth—canst thou in this moment of suspense, when the cloud of his misfortunes break-

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ing emits one ray of light—when all his hopes hang on the slight tenure of a tyrant and a murderer's will—canst thou sympathize with him in his feelings, and with a virtuous sketch of the imagination beguile yourself into his condition? Here the king, much affected, Endeavoured to raise him.—Yes thou canst, continued the Baron; —I see it—heaven-born pity beams in your eyes, and through them speaks consolation to my heart. Oh Baron, interrupted the king, rise! Ah no, my liege! let old Rayo, who has often made the infidels and enemies of Castile bow the knee before your grandfire's throne, here cling to the ground till his boon be granted. I grant it, said the king, giving him his hand—Rise, Baron, I beseech you.

My boon, then, said the Baron rising, is, that this very night measures may be taken to secure the prior and heads of the convent of Vallesanto, and the Marquis of Punalada with his domestics.

I will not only do so, said the king, but will even take it as a favour if Don Juan will go along with you. Don Juan cheerfully assented, and received orders to direct three troops of horse to hold themselves instantly in readiness to march. Meantime, said the king, I shall send for the

archbishop of Toledo to attend me, in order to get his warrant, without which I should not wish to touch the convent.

The next morning all marched properly instructed and authorised; the Baron and his party going out of the city by a different route from Don Juan and the troops. On the evening of the fourth day they reached the valley, and according to the plan settled between them, the Baron and Don Isidor and two troops went round by the Villaverde road to the castle, while one led by Don Juan, and attended by Father Thomas and Alphonso, went towards the convent, where, after giving proper instructions to the commanding officer, they left them, and proceeded to the chapel, removed the usual impediments, and found their way into the vault. Here having viewed every thing, Alphonso drew forth the key, opened the door, entered the transverse passage, and proceeded gently towards the door that looked into the lady's chamber. They perceived her lying asleep upon a couch, and a lamp burning on a table by her side. Here they impatiently waited the sound of the trumpet from the castle-gate, each straining his eyes to get a view of the lady's face, yet daring not to make a noise. At length the wished-for signal

signal was given—the trumpet sounded—an universal clamour and noise was heard at a distance—The lady still slept—A clanking of chains was distinguished approaching the chamber on the far side; and the door flying open, the man seen before appeared dragging along the ground by the hair, with one hand, the unfortunate Fernando, who being shackled could not stand, and in the other brandishing a sabre, while fury, wildness and terror rendered his countenance beyond expression horrible—Here, Madam! said he, dragging the youth to the foot of the couch—the hour is come, and your son is brought to die at your feet!—The lady suddenly started from her sleep, screeched, threw herself upon her son, and swooned.

You have now, said he to Fernando, brought treason to my doors, and 'tis fit that you should die: to make vengeance more complete, I will wait till your mother revives to behold it. Alphonso could no longer restrain himself, but rushing against the door splintered it to pieces.—Villain! cried he, hold your murderous hand, or this instant thou diest!

The Marquis started at the word—and looked up. At the sight of Alphonso the sword fell from his hand—his hair stood erect—his knees knocked against each other—his face assumed the very

image of death—he was bereft of speech with the agony of his fear, and his eyes glared without any appearance of motion—At length he threw himself prostrate on his face, and fell into a swoon.

Meantime the lady, assisted by Don Juan, came to herself—and stared wildly round her.—Is he dead? said she—Oh no! Is not this he? Alas! I have not seen my child these many years!—She then looked down eagerly on her son, who, on his part, seeing his friend Alphonso, exclaimed in ecstacy—Good God! is this my Alphonso?—Surely it is—Ah! where, Alphonso! where is the Baron de Rayo?—Hah!—where—what saidst thou, my child? did you say the Baron de Rayo? it cannot be—Ah, no!—my father—my beloved father is long since numbered with the dead—else I should not be here, nor you my child.—No—my father is now in company with those christian heroes, whose valour and virtues adorned human nature, singing hymns of glory to the Most High!

While this was passing in the subterranean part of the castle, the officer had summoned, in the king's name, the lord of the castle to open the gates.—The Marquis, who had, in his consternation at the first account of their arrival, proceeded

ceeded to the act of desperation already mentioned, was sought for in vain over the castle—Attendants ran up and down—and the Prior, perceiving the convent gate besieged by a troop, immediately betook himself to his wonted passage to seek the Marquis:—his route lay through the left branch of the vaulted gallery already mentioned, and thence along by the door of the lady's chamber. Hearing a noise of words, he thought the Marquis was there, and in his precipitation burst into the chamber, just as the lady had ended her last sentence. Nothing could exceed his astonishment—he started back—but she saw him, and breaking off suddenly—Hah! officious pandar, said she, art thou come to help thy lord and master, and fill up the measure of thy iniquities by new butcheries? Father, said Don Juan, stepping up to him, I arrest you in the name of the king. Then turning to Alphonso, and pointing to the Marquis, who still lay prostrate—Lift up that recreant lord, and let us bring them both from this place towards the castle, which it should seem lies this way. They then lifted up the Marquis, who opening his eyes, stared at Alphonso, and bellowed out aloud—It is, it is the murdered Gonsalvo!—They hurried him and the prior suddenly through the door by which his lordship had entered, while
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the lady, who had all along kept her eyes fixed on her son Fernando, at the name of Gonfalvo, cast up her eyes and caught a side glimpse of Alphonso, just as he pushed the Marquis through the door. She instantly screamed aloud—started from the body of her son, and calling out, My husband! my husband! flew towards Alphonso—while he and Don Juan were beyond measure shocked and astonished. Don Juan apprehending her to be delirious laid hold of her, and with some resistance on her part brought her back to the couch. She screamed and struggled violently.—Oh villain! villain! are you too a murderer? and will you keep me from my long lost lord whom I thought dead?—She then paused, and turning to him said, Is he indeed alive, or has my sight been blessed with the shade of my beloved? For Heaven's sake, dear lady, said Don Juan, compose yourself, and prepare your mind for news that will delight you; for though your husband be not alive, your deliverance from the tyrant is at hand, and all will yet be well. Just at these words they heard a great noise—I must go, said Don Juan, my presence may be necessary.—Good heavens! said the lady, looking earnestly at him, is not this—Alas! my recollection is gone, and time and grief have effaced names from
my

my memory—Were you not a friend of Gonzalvo's? I was.—Your name? Don Juan de Padilla. The same, said she.—Does my father live? said she eagerly.—He does, replied Don Juan—I must away and will bring him to you soon.

Then said she, I have yet a father and a child—but I have lost my husband! yet, blessed be he that hath in the general wreck of our house spared me what he hath.

Don Juan at length found his way, directed by the noise, through a long, dark-vaulted gallery, which led him into a small closet, whence, following the sound, he passed through several chambers, till at last he came to a large hall, where he found the Marquis and the Prior surrounded by a crowd of soldiers and domestics, to whom the Baron was explaining the nature of the affair, and the manner of the discovery of the Marquis's villainy—while he sat crest-fallen, with his head dropped upon his breast—and the Prior endeavoured to expostulate with the Baron, and throw the whole odium of the business upon the Marquis.

The entrance of Don Juan put an end to the whole cabal—he ordering the Marquis and Prior to be confined in separate places, to prevent

vent any collusive arrangement with regard to their confession.

Fear not, said the Prior, I will confess all—Here I shake off all that false lenity which has hitherto restrained me from discovering this bad man's guilt: every thing that I know, from the beginning to this minute—even the little share of sin that I have had by winking so long at it, shall be candidly and without reserve laid before you.

Here the Marquis started, like one suddenly roused from sleep—To the king's mandate, said he, addressing Don Juan, I bow with due submission, and shall attend you, Sir, whithersoever you shall be ordered to lead me: but let not the calm artifice, the monkish subtilty of that wretch, heap more guilt upon me than is properly my own. What share he has had in my misfortunes you shall all soon know. Then will you see what mischiefs may lurk beneath the monkish cowl. Heaven incensed, demands expiation of a foul offence, and shall have it—if the most unequivocal avowal and ample confession, rendering to the last letter of truth justice to him and to myself can lead to it. To this end I will draw up, and afterwards sign in presence of you all, a full confession of this dark affair.

affair. Let me have but two hours to myself for the purpose, undisturbed in my closet.

After consulting together, it was agreed that he should be allowed the time required, but not in his closet. Pen, ink, and paper, were therefore allowed him in a room in a distant wing of the castle, where he could get at no papers or evidences to destroy them—while guards were stationed beneath the windows and at the door. Mean time they entered his closet, where they locked up and sealed all his papers—They then proceeded to the vault, where the young Fernando was released, and the Baron once more pressed to his bosom his long-lost daughter.

When the indescribable emotions of paternal affection and filial reverence had a little subsided into calmness, they led her forth into the upper part of the castle, where, the unaccustomed air and light overcoming her, she swooned, and was put to bed by a female attendant of the castle; while the Baron, Don Juan and the rest continued their search, and were astonished at the number of vaults and subterraneous passages which lay in all directions round the foundations of the castle and convent. They concluded by closing up the vault where the bones of Gonsalvo lay, till
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arrangements should be made for a proper interment.

Three hours had been thus spent, when they returned to the hall, and finding that the Marquis had not yet come forth, proceeded to the room where he was : they knocked at the door, and receiving no answer, opened it, and found the unhappy man covered with blood, and in the agonies of death—They raised him up, and he expired. He had cut the great artery of the neck entirely a-crofs, and so had rendered assistance, had it been at hand on the minute, ineffectual. A paper fresh written, and signed by him, lay on the table. Don Juan took it up, and delivered it to Father Thomas, who read it aloud in the following words :

CHAP.

C H A P. XIII.

THIS castle was once a nunnery, and is coeval with the convent of Vallefanto; this will account for the number of subterraneous passages which unite them: in an invasion of the Moors they took possession of it, and dispersed the nuns, after having violated their chastity. One of my ancestors drove them hence, and got the estate from the king as the reward of his valour: hence the convent became in some sort under the dominion of the lord of this castle, who, by various entrenchments on the rights of the church, got at last the sole appointment of prior to the convent. The monster who is now prior was bred by my father's charity about this castle, a mendicant child; he was the companion of my youth, the depository of my secrets—the confidant and agent of my amours; and when by my father's desire he took the habit, he became my confessor.

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On my coming to the estate I kept him in my family, intending to give him the priory on the death of the then incumbent. Meantime I married, and found in the Marchioness a most tender and affectionate companion, and a gentle corrector of my vices. I was happy:—but the enemy of mankind envied me my bliss, and in the shape of that friar plunged me into eternal—endless—endless perdition!

Gonsalvo brought his wife to Toledo—I saw her, and was smitten with her beauty—yet for a time I had virtue enough to resist the flame. I confessed it to Father Pedro. Again I told—again bewailed my misery, and lamented the flame that consumed me.—He used his endeavours to mitigate it, by letting in at first a ray of sinful hope.—Here I first stumbled—and never recovered myself till I fell into the abyss of guilt in which you see me: with the subtle casuistry of a church logician, he refined away the criminality of adulterous indulgence, by opposing it to the sin of suicide, for so he denominated my forbearing, at the risk of my life and health, which were obviously declining. He laid a plan:—even now, after an interval of twenty years spent in buffeting the assaults of conscience, my blood runs cold to think of it! He not only devised the diabo-

lical plan, but he aided in the execution of it.—The Marchioness was in the way—she fell sick—the reverend father found her a physician, and she died.—The prior of this convent fell sick, and died also.

Hitherto all fell out, or rather was conducted to the accomplishment of the chief plot—Gonsalvo was made to believe that the king looked with an eye of lust upon his wife, and intended to ravish her from him: I was his close counsellor and friend, and persuaded him to carry her away with the utmost secrecy, and deposit her in a nunnery, which I told him was here. The Father was their guide—I hastened to the castle, while he conducted them to the convent, and by a private door let them through the convent into the cemetery, from which, he said, the lady should pass into the nunnery. She was accordingly led into a remote room of this castle near the passage to the cemetery, while I went forward with two assassins, hired for the purpose by the priest.—We led Gonsalvo into that vault where his body was found, and as he stooped to enter (his great height making him stoop more than us, and he consequently being more exposed), one of the assassins smote him with a sabre, and split his skull.—With the priest's help we took a shell and some

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boards

boards from the cemetery, and putting him in buried him on the spot. When this was done, the priest whispered me privately, that our safety demanded the death of the assassins. He did not allow me time to deliberate, but turning suddenly round plunged a dagger into the breast of him that was nearest, and then assailing the other, who resisted, I dispatched him with my sword on the instant.

The virtue of the lady set her above all my efforts. The officious churchman proposed force.—I attempted it, but in vain—the feeble efforts of a weak woman were sufficient to beat me from that object, for the attainment of which I had waded through a sea of blood.

By bribing the nurse I got her child into my hands—Fernando is he—I daily threatened him with death if she did not comply. In vain—she resisted—and remains as pure in person as in soul.

By a feigned tale to the King I got all the family estates confiscated, and put in my possession. If my crimes admit of any mitigation, let it not be forgot that I saved Baron de Rayo from Peter's fury; who, incensed with the Baron's haughtiness, would, but for me, have put him to death.—Let this speak in favour of my inno-

cent daughter.—Fernando's nurse lives—she is in——

PUNALADA.

Here the knocking at the door cut off the rest, and left them in doubt about the nurse.

Don Juan ordered the domestics, who were at hand, to take the body of the Marquis—then sealed the papers in presence of all, and gave strict orders to keep the Prior in custody. He then took Fernando, who was so bewildered with the wonders of the day that he scarcely knew whether what passed was reality or a dream, by the hand, and saluted him by the name of Gonfalso, congratulating him at the same time on the fortunate discovery of his parents, and his certain accession to rank and fortune. The Baron, little less bewildered, looked at Fernando, and ever and anon grasped his hand with a tenderness mixed sometimes with astonishment, and sometimes with doubt.

While they were making the proper arrangements for securing every thing to abide the King's pleasure, a woman came in and informed them that the lady had recovered from the fit, but was delirious. The Baron and Fernando immediately proceeded to her chamber—Come hither, my

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father,

father, said she, and give your daughter a last blessing—and you, my son, to Fernando, come and take mine.

Why? my child, said the Baron, kneeling down by her—why a last blessing? This sickness, produced by the shocks and surprises of the day, and the change of air, will soon wear off, and days of happiness will yet attend you. Never, my father—oh never! I have seen that which assures me—What have you seen, my Maria? Oh my most beloved and most respected sire! think not that from any delirium of the mind, any temporary weakness of intellect, proceeds what I am to tell you—it is, it is true—As I do live, I saw my Henry, my husband! In that hideous vault I this day saw him—so lovely—so graceful—so majestic, as when first you blessed me with the words, “Gonsalvo should be mine.” Calm, my dear, said the Baron tenderly—calm those violent agitations, which proceed from error, an error which I can explain, and will effectually. He whose figure has so deceived you, is the son of Don Isidor de Haro, your cousin and Gonsalvo’s, but so exactly the counterpart of my son, that I never see him without astonishment. His likeness struck the guilty Marquis into a paroxysm of horror that shook reason from its seat, and made him his own accuser.

Isidor

Ifidor lives, then ? said she. He does, replied the Baron ; the friend, the support, and the protection of your father's age ; and to this son of his we owe, under God, the discovery of this horrid affair. As soon as rest has fitted you for a new surprise, you shall see them both, and hear every thing : meantime, my child, let this assurance appease the perturbation of your mind, and try and take some rest. You are now safe, continued he, rescued from the ravisher and murderer's hands ; restored to light, to life, to family and friends—bend in gratitude to that God, who, by a signal and miraculous interposition, hath brought about your deliverance.

These words drew tears from her eyes—she sunk in grateful humility into her bed—took her father's hand and kissed it—then her son's—and, turning without saying a word, left them to depart.

Meantime an account of the Marquis's death and the arrest of the Prior reached the convent—all there was uproar—the guard would let no one pass.—At length a requisition was sent from the young lady there, to be permitted to pass to the castle and see her father, though dead—This was readily granted. She flew—and—passed through the court-yard, and entered the great hall in

a state of distraction, calling aloud on her father— She passed by Don Isidor, Don Juan, and every one who met her, without seeming conscious of their presence—At length she met Alphonso—at sight of him she stopped short, and stared with a fixed attention;—her bosom heaved—her colour shifted from red to white, and back again;—her limbs trembled, and she was falling when he caught her in his arms.—She remained insensible for some time—at length recovering, she again regarded him with a steady gaze, and in a deep piercing tone said, Then thou art he, and the prediction is accomplished—the house of Punalada is in ruins!—Then breaking from him, Shew me, shew me, said she, where my father is! and darted from their sight.

That day Don Juan and Alphonso, with one troop of horse, and the Prior their prisoner, set out for Burgos, as well to lay the whole before the King, as procure a proper conveyance to remove the lady from the castle. The King was horror-struck and astonished—he forthwith called a council, of which the Archbishop of Toledo made part, in which it was determined that the Prior should be handed over to the grand inquisitor—that the attainder of Gonfalso should be entirely erased from the records of the court—that the

title

title of Punalada should be extinguished, and the Marquis's whole fortunes confiscated—and that so much of them as had before belonged to the Baron and Gonfálvo, together with one half of his own original estate, reserving a small annuity for his daughter, should pass over to the Baron and his issue—the King reserving the other half to himself, to bestow on Alphonso. That day proclamation was made of the Marquis's death, attainder and forfeiture, and of the reinvestiture of the Baron, with his estate, rank, and title.

They returned to the castle of Punalada, with a carriage of the King's to convey the lady to court, the King being desirous of offering her every mark of distinction, and a vehicle for the remains of Gonfálvo. When they arrived they found that Don Rodrigo had been there, and, on being refused admission to his uncle's closet, and possession of the castle, had set off in a rage, threatening them all with the indignation of the King—that the Marquis's body had been consigned to the earth with the ignominy attached to suicide—and that the lady was recruited, and not only willing, but desirous to quit the castle.

When Alphonso was, after proper precaution, introduced to her, her astonishment was greater than ever it was before—She knew not what to

think—what to say—or how to conduct herself—
 She looked at every one round her in turn, to read
 in their faces some solution of a mystery that she
 could not help thinking was involved in it—Her
 husband, her beloved Gonfálvo stood before her—
 Astonishment drank up her tears—she could not
 cry—yet she would if she could, to ease her heart.
 With much difficulty at length she faltered out,
 Is this then, really, the son of Don Isidor de
 Haro? and is Fernando mine, or is it done to
 mock me?—The Baron looked grave—Don Isi-
 dor more so—It is so, said she—yet it's strange. It
 is the will of God, said the Baron, and shall we
 sinfully presume to scan it? No, said she, no, how-
 ever irreconcilable it may be to our weak senses,
 it must be right—Here she paused. This confu-
 sion of resemblance, said she, Don Isidor, points
 out that union which should always subsist between
 our children; therefore suffer me to treat Al-
 phonso, and this our son, as equally our children.
 You speak my very soul, madam, said Don Isidor,
 for my attachment to your son is not less than
 yours to mine; and there seems already to subsist
 between them the affection of brothers. The
 youths were delighted—all parties were as happy
 as their different circumstances may be supposed
 to admit of. Preparations were made for
 their

their departure—The Baron got the remains of Gonfalso, even to the dust in the chest, carefully put into a coffin, and laid in the vehicle. Then after seeing the King's officers take possession and seal down every thing, the Baron, Father Thomas and Don Isidor got with the lady into the carriage and proceeded towards Burgos, while Alphonso and his friend Fernando rode by their side.

C H A P. XIV.

IT was pretty far advanced in the night of the fourth day before they came near the city : Alphonso and Fernando, taken up with reflection and mutual congratulations on their happiness, dropped behind, and had fallen into conversation on the beauty of the night and the brightness of the moon, when, just as the carriage turned the corner at the extreme end of an olivary, and got out of hearing, a band of armed ruffians rushed from the covert of the trees upon the two youths, who had no person to aid them in resistance but Pierrot. Before they were prepared to defend themselves, one of the ruffians from behind buried a dagger in the shoulder of Alphonso, and felled him to the earth. Fernando on the instant saw the stroke given, and smote the ruffian to the ground ; he then vigorously attacked the rest, and Pierrot coming up to his aid beat them off all but three, who lay weltering under the wounds given them by Fernando. Pierrot then pursued and stopt the coach, relating at the same time what had passed—

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Don Alphonso, said he, is killed, and we may all at once put an end to ourselves. The lady screamed—Don Isidor burst from the carriage, and, followed by the Baron, ran up to the field of action, and found Fernando weeping over the body of Alphonso:—Alas, my brother, my brother, my friend! but one instant sooner and I should have saved you—Oh! would to Heaven the dagger had met my heart instead of yours: but, unhappy that I am, I saw the blow but time enough to revenge, and save my own worthless life, while thine is lost. Where, said Don Isidor, where is my boy?—where is my Alphonso?—Let us lift him up, said the Baron; perhaps life may yet be in him. Gallop forward, said Father Thomas to Pierrot, and see if there be a house at hand, to which we can carry him; and go you and bring a surgeon directly—perhaps something may yet be done. Just at this instant, a patrol of the Ronda * came up mounted. The Baron hailed them—Here hath been murder committed, said he; have you got a light?—Yes, said the officer, and displaying a dark lantern dismounted and examined those on the ground. Alphonso was bleeding profusely; they lifted him up, tore off his coat, and perceived that

* A patrol or watch in Spain.

the wound had entered his shoulder-blade very deep: they did their utmost to stop the effusion of blood, and the captain of the troop being informed by one of his people, that the carriage in waiting belonged to the King, drew forth a leathern bottle with wine, and poured some of it down Alphonso's throat—He soon exhibited some slight tokens of life, his pulse moved. They brought him to the carriage, where they found Donna Maria inconsolable; and by the direction of the officer moved forward to an inn not far distant, while he and his men took charge of the wounded ruffians, and brought them after.

Alphonso was laid on a bed at the inn with little symptom of life—a surgeon soon attended, and declared that it was impossible he could recover. Donna Maria was distracted, and, impelled by an unaccountable feeling which overcame form, hung upon him and kissed his clay-cold lips. She was at last drawn away to give room to the surgeon, who, examining narrowly, began to be of opinion that the wound had not reached any vital part, and observed that he must have been hurt elsewhere: he therefore examined him carefully, particularly about the head, and found a considerable swelling just above the ear—Here, said he, is the chief injury; can you tell how

he

he received it, or from what sort of weapon? He got but one stroke, replied Fernando, and that was in the shoulder. Then the hurt in the head has proceeded from his weight in falling, and the loss of blood from the shoulder is in that case rather useful than injurious. While they were thus speaking, Alphonso began to breathe hard, then groaned: the surgeon ordered a glass of water, with which he wetted his lips, letting a little down—Still the word was death.

Meantime the officers of the Ronda had got the wounded assassins to the inn. One appeared, from his equipments, to be a gentleman of considerable rank, but he was in as hopeless a state as Alphonso: another was in the livery of a servant; and a third had the appearance of a bravo. The two last were coming to themselves, but the first seemed quite senseless though he breathed; they were all desperately wounded, particularly the gentleman, whose arm was cloven at the joint of the shoulder almost from his body.

As the accident happened at the distance of less than a league from the city of Burgos, Don Isidor, on his arrival at the inn, wrote off to Don Juan, informing him of the affair, and intreating proper assistance to be sent out. Don Juan himself arrived in two hours after the messenger was dispatched,
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and the King's surgeon along with him, who, on examining Alphonso, enquired whether he had indicated any disposition to vomit? and on being answered in the negative declared it to be his opinion, that he had only been extremely stunned with the fall, and added, that in all probability he would soon come to himself. He ordered his head to be chafed with warm spirits, his extremities to be rubbed, and some warm wine poured down his throat: in short, he took his measures so well, that before morning the youth was restored to his senses, though extremely weak. Don Juan did every thing he could to cheer the Baron and Don Isidor, assuring them that the King intended to make ample amends to the family for the injuries it had sustained; and that he intended the first honours in the state for Alphonso, whom he loved more than any of his favourites, though much had been done to injure him in his opinion: — nay such, he said, was the attachment of the King, that he would not inform him of the present accident before he came away, to avoid giving him unnecessary pain.

When the two inferior assassins came to themselves, Don Juan, the Baron, and Don Isidor were informed of it, and coming to the room where they were, Don Juan was immediately des-
cried

series by him who wore the livery. Whose servant are you? said Don Juan severely. I am the servant of Don Rodrigo de Calvados, said the fellow. Oho! said Don Juan—and where is your master? There, your honour, said the fellow, pointing significantly to a bench where the gentleman's body lay.—Then it was he who set you on this enterprise? said Don Juan. God bless your honour, returned the fellow, I knew not what I was going about till I was in the very heart of it: this honest man here, who, God bless us! looks liker the devil than a man, will tell you more—I was only a servant. Don Juan looking at the fellow perceived that he was a bravo, and ordered the two to be immediately carried under a strong guard to jail.

The next day Alphonso was much recovered, but complained of a violent pain from the wound in his shoulder: he was however declared by the surgeon to be able to proceed slowly in the carriage to Burgos. The gentleman assassin, Don Rodrigo too, was able to proceed on a litter; a strong guard was ordered for him, and he was deposited in the jail, and a surgeon ordered to attend him: his mother was almost mad with vexation and disappointment—but all her interest, all her tears, all her falsehoods, and all her address

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were of no avail; she could get no one hardy enough to apply to the King in his favour.

During Alphonso's illness Donna Maria never quitted him, but when delicacy required.

But, a considerable time having elapsed, and the wound continuing in the same state, the surgeon expressed his surprise at the slowness of the process, and frequently animadverted on symptoms of a feverish kind, for which he could not account. One day making those remarks in the hearing of Pierrot, that honest soul said, that he fancied he could tell the cause of it.

Why, what is the cause of it, wiseman? said Don Isidor.—Love, your honour, replied Pierrot, bluntly. Love!—in the name of God, with whom? I am sure, your honour, I don't know—and I believe it is more than he knows himself: the picture that hangs about his neck, perhaps, may tell—though I doubt that too, for they were strangers.

Are you mad, fellow? said the Baron hastily. No, your worship, replied Pierrot, I am not, I hope; I do the best at least that I can to avoid it: for I neither go out to seek fighting adventures, nor do I fall in love with every pretty girl in distress, which seems to me to be the ways of going mad now-a-days—I will tell you what I know. He

then told him of the adventure with the two ladies in Portugal—concluding with an assurance, that since his young master had seen them, he never had had one hour's peace, nor, he believed, been right in his head.

Don Isidor seemed extremely uneasy—retired to a room—wrote letters, and dispatched a messenger with them instantly down to the castle of Duero. The rest of the day he seemed extremely unhappy, nor could the Baron or any of his friends account for the strange alteration in his manner.

Next day he put the question of his love with some delicacy to Alphonso; who candidly acknowledged, that a lady he had met with on his travels in Portugal had gained entire possession of his affections—and though he scarcely hoped ever to see her again, he could not help cherishing the love with which she inspired him, and indulging some small hopes.—He then told his father the whole story, and concluded with shewing him the picture. At sight of the picture Don Isidor turned pale, his lips quivered, his whole frame trembled with the agitation of his mind—He was for some minutes speechless—At length breaking silence: It is as I feared, said he!—Oh unhappy youth!—Good God, my father! exclaimed Alphonso, to what strange story is this dreadful agi-

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tation a prelude?—Alas! my unhappy child, said Don Isidor, prepare to hear that which must pierce your soul with horror!—Yet you must know it; though instant death attended the information, you must know it—Better to die than live one hour in the conception of a deadly sin!—That young lady—Good God! do I live to tell it to my son!—that young lady, with whom you were so deeply enamoured, is—your sister!—My sister?—Yes, your sister! and she, that lady whom you rescued along with her, is mine—the Marchioness Deloro.—Then I am undone! exclaimed Alphonso;—undone here—and lost to all eternity!

Say not so, my child, said Don Isidor—we are to believe that the Almighty, who is merciful, will judge by the intention, and not assign the punishment of a deliberate crime to a passion involuntary and unintentional. This horror that you feel is in itself an expiation, if it be followed up with a firm determination to expel the poison from your soul.

Ah, there, there, my father, there lies the horror!—I fear I must cease to live ere I cease to sin—if loving—

Hah! interrupted Don Isidor—hold your impious tongue, nor utter in my presence language so detestable—If so lost in guilt as to dare the
thunder

thunder of the Almighty, which flow to execute emboldens sinners—dost thou not fear that a father's indignation should rise and crush you into ruin.

Alas, my father! how do you mistake me, said Alphonso. Perhaps I do, hastily interrupted Don Isidor: yet it is to me a subject of that nature, the bare imagination of which harrows up my soul:—I am not fit to speak upon it—I shall therefore retire and content myself with offering up my prayers to Heaven in your behalf; nor will I again behold you till I have firm assurance that you have banished the hellish passion, even to the last shadow, from your breast, or that death has snatched you from its power. So saying, Don Isidor withdrew, leaving the unhappy Alphonso in a state of distraction, horror, and grief. It was the first time in his life that a word engendered in anger had fallen from his father—and his last expressions smote him the more poignantly to the heart.

On Don Isidor's meeting the Baron and Father Thomas, they were astonished at the strange discomposure of his air and countenance—they were both alarmed, and almost in a breath asked him for Alphonso. Would to God! said Don Isidor, that the

assassin's poignard had cut him off ere he should have lived to tell the horrid tale—he is in love with his sister ! They stared aghast—Yes, said he, after telling them the story, it is not guilt alone that meets the scourge in this life ; for I am cursed as Punalada was, and incestuous love blights my family !——

Hold, hold, Don Isidor ! interrupted the priest ; judgment belongs to God—resignation is the duty of man ; beware, therefore, that while you denounce vengeance against your son, and call him sinner, you are not yourself dipping deeper in sin than he. It appears from your own account, that at the time he first conceived this unhappy passion, he knew not the object of it was his sister ; in the outset, therefore, no sin is imputable, since we must believe that God judges us by our means of knowledge : to expect him then on the instant to dislodge a deep-rooted passion, is to expect more than human nature is capable of performing. It must be the work of time, and strong virtuous resolution ;—and believe me, that every effort of his to overcome it will be more acceptable in the eyes of the Almighty, than ten thousand acts of mere passive, negative virtue. I know and will answer for his principles, and have no
fear

fear of the event but what arises from the state of his health. I shall therefore go and converse with him; and, I entreat, that in the mean time you will on your part recollect, that gusts of rage and boisterous invective are above all things incompatible with the mild spirit of that glorious religion which we all adore; though some of us, to be judged from our actions, would seem to be ignorant of it.

C H A P. XV.

IN a short time Father Thomas returned with a face unusually imprinted with sorrow: he desired that a physician should be immediately sent for, for that Alphonso was raving mad—that he sometimes talked of his sister, sometimes of his aunt, and sometimes called upon his cruel, cruel father.

A messenger was directly sent for a physician; he came, and declared Alphonso to be in such a state as left little room for hope—exhausted as he had been already, he was afraid to bleed him, and expressed a fear that the feverish delirium would sink upon the spirits and carry him off. He ordered him a medicine, and, desiring to be called upon the appearance of any new symptom, went away.

As night advanced, Alphonso grew more outrageous, and they were broke in upon at supper by the faithful Pierrot, who told them, that he was
tearing

tearing off the dressings from his wounds, and that four of them were unable to hold him. They all directly rose and went to his chamber; Donna Maria herself would not stay behind—there they found him in the most dreadful state of furious insanity, tearing himself to pieces, while the blood gushed afresh from his half-healed wounds; and the attendants were lying about the room, bruised by the flings he had given them against the walls. The Baron directly ran to him, pinioned his arms behind his back, and with the wrists of a giant held him down. Don Isidor came in to his assistance, and they brought him to some order: when in a few minutes growing insensibly weak, he languished away, wept, and sunk into a swoon. By this time the surgeon who was sent for came, and prepared to re-dress the wound; all the patient's back was covered with blood, and he ordered it to be washed while he prepared his dressings—Donna Maria herself undertook the task—she washed away the blood, while the Baron held the basin. At length, to the astonishment of all, she screamed out—Mother of God, my son! and sunk back upon the bed.

Does it please Heaven, said Don Isidor, to mock our miseries, and send insanity throughout

us all?—Do I dream, or has this lady dreamed?—Can’st thou tell me, Baron, whither tends all this strange extravagant incident that marks our fortune of late, and makes the adventures of our house more like romance than reality?

In our affairs, replied the Baron, the real is so interwoven with the marvellous, that the whole seems tinged with the colours of romance, and seeks the aid of proof: such proof is now before us. This youth is her son, and my grandson—There lies proof indelibly written by the hand of nature on his body. By Heavens! exclaimed Don Isidor, the madness grows round, and I myself I fear shall shortly catch it. If madness be, returned the Baron warmly, it is with yourself Don Isidor! who hold up your own rash opinion, founded upon circumstances subject to error and imposition, against the testimony of nature itself, and boldly confront the written characters of providence—Look, see those grapes painted by the hand of nature in his mother’s womb. Just at this time the lady, who had been supported by Father Thomas, came to herself—Give me, give me my child, said she—Oh spare him, Heaven!—Then looking—Yes! there, there they are—Oh my Gonfalso! surely something prophetic wrought within thy mind on that day, when in sportive innocence you
dropped

dropped a bunch of grapes down my back—I started, softly complained being then pregnant—You then, my love, said, in playful fondness said, that if we lost our child, that would be a mark by which to know him—Alas, my love! little didst thou think by what sad calamities we should lose him, or in what horrible way he should be found—found but to be lost again for ever!

If I live, said the Baron, some strange fraud has been practised on us both—a fraud most likely never to be developed. That Gonfálvo's son has exactly this mark I can give testimony; now let us see whether Fernando has it. Fernando declared that he had not. Then it is certain, said the Baron, that this is the son of Gonfálvo.

It is strange, said Don Isidor, it is beyond all comprehension strange, that a child nursed under the inspection of—But what do I say? To-morrow I will send off to Talavera, and have the old woman at whose place he was nursed brought, with her whole family, here.

Reserve your arguments, said Father Thomas to a fitter occasion; at present let us look to the lady, who seems to stand in need of care little less than the young gentleman.

The next morning Pierrot was dispatched to the village near Talavera, to bring the old wo-

man who had been nurse to Don Isidor's lady, her whole family, and the nurse who was employed to suckle their child, directly to Burgos, but with strict injunctions not to apprize them of a sentence that had passed. During this juncture Alphonso's fever had a fortunate crisis ; he recovered the use of his senses, and, though extremely weak, gave some hopes of recovery. It was thought adviseable, however, to keep the discovery a secret from him, till such proof should be had as would put it past a doubt one way or other.

At length Pierrot returned, and with him the nurse who had suckled Don Isidor's child, and her husband ; the old woman having been some time dead. Don Isidor ordered them to be conducted into the room where Donna Maria was, and where the Baron, Father Thomas, and Fernando attended—it was agreed that Father Thomas should speak to her. Nurse, said he, I presume you are well enough acquainted with the principles of our holy religion, and the extent to which they reach, to know the dreadful punishment attending any kind of fraud. If you do not, I will tell you that however it may be hid from mortal eyes, it cannot be concealed from the Almighty, who will not fail to punish it with everlasting torments : when detected here, it meets the heaviest punishment

punishment of the law. Of both these, nurse, you and your husband stand in imminent danger ; nor can any thing but a fair confession save you from being handed over instantly to the cognizance of criminal law. Answer me, then, as you hope for mercy here, or salvation hereafter—Where is the child of Don Isidor de Haro, which you, for purposes best known to yourselves, have changed, imposing for so many years upon him the charge of a child not his own—while on the other hand you may have devoted his to misery, want, or even death?—Speak, speak the truth, and believe me nothing else can save you ; for, of one part of the charge against you we have unquestionable evidence.

I will, Father ! I will ! exclaimed the nurse, throwing herself on her knees—I will tell the truth, and though to save myself from ruin I was guilty of concealing the story from Don Isidor, I am as innocent as the child unborn of the changing, as you shall know.

One day after I had brought Don Isidor's child home to nurse, a woman with a child on her breast called in towards the close of the day ; said she was a traveller and begged a lodging—She added, that she was travelling from Andalusia to Saragossa, and must be away by break of day
next

next morning—As we never refused a christian shelter, we desired her to stay, and gave her share of what we had. The weather was extremely hot, and we all lay out on mats in the piazza of our cottage. Just at day-break we heard the stranger move—she got up, and bid us adieu and went away. We wished her to stay for breakfast ; but she refused, alledging that she had a long journey before her, and must not delay.

When we arose, the child was asleep in the cradle ; so that altogether the woman had been gone three hours before I went to take it up. Guess my sorrow and surprise, when I found that the vile wretch had changed the child. I knew it directly by a bunch of purple grapes on the back, though in other respects the children were very like each other.

Why did you not tell Don Isidor then ? said the Priest.

Had I been inclined to do so, replied the woman, it would have been impossible, for he and his lady, we were told, had gone into France ; but you shall hear. I ran, continued she, directly to my husband, who was at work, and told him. He was going to kill me with his sickle : he immediately broke off from work, and went in pursuit of her, charging me to say nothing till his return, as he

was

was pretty sure of overtaking her. But, God help us, he was all the time going farther from her; for we afterwards found that she had told us wrong, and was going towards Andalusia, instead of turning from it. At night he returned weary and broken hearted—we knew not what to do—we feared to discover the matter—and thought it best to leave it to chance. The thing past over—the old woman my lady's nurse was deceived—and finding that we had no reason to fear a discovery, we thought it best, as it could not be remedied, to say nothing. This I call God and our Redeemer to witness is the whole truth, and I hope you will think that I am not so much to be blamed.

Just as they had done examining the woman, a letter came directed to the Baron; it was from the King's officer at Punalada castle, and was in these words :

“ Most excellent Lord,

“ In our searches through the many subterranean vaults under this castle we found, starved almost to death, a woman who says she has been confined many years by the Marquis, she imagined at least fifty; but that, from her story otherwise, is impossible. She adds, that she has a secret of the utmost

utmost consequence to unfold—briefly to this effect:—She was the nurse of Don Henrico Gonfalso's son—was seduced by a priest (whom I suppose to be the Prior) to give up the child to the Marquis; that at last being prevailed upon, she travelled with it towards Andalusia, and falling by accident into a cottage where a child of Don Isidor de Haro (whom she knew to be the cousin of Gonfalso) was at nurse, she determined to save the child, whom she loved, from the intentions of the Marquis, which she thought might possibly be wicked; and accordingly left Don Gonfalso's in the bed, and carried away Don Isidor's. So that by this account, the youth Fernando, it is probable, is Don Isidor's, and the other your grandchild. The woman is in custody, so take your measures accordingly.

P. S. The woman is dying, and has made oath to this effect.)

Here, said the Baron, giving the letter to Don Isidor, all is cleared up—Fernando is yours—Alphonso is mine.

Alphonso shall still be mine, replied Don Isidor, for he shall be married to my daughter—I wrote to my sister, who arrived at Duero castle the day after

we left it, from Portugal, whence she was obliged to fly to escape the importunities and power of an old nobleman who had fallen in love with my daughter. She wrote me an account of her rescue by a young Spaniard, long since, from Seville. I have now received her answer to my letter; and am happy to find that the impression Alphonso made upon her niece keeps pace with his love for her. When Pierrot first hinted the affair, I suspected the fact just as it turned out. Come, Baron, said Don Isidor, let us give a loose to joy—each of us has gained without the other being a loser—and these events, which at first appeared so adverse, will serve to unite our families by additional bonds of affection.

The body of Gonfalso was buried in great pomp at Montalto; and, soon after, Alphonso received Don Isidor's daughter to his arms—was invested with half the estates of the Marquis by the King; the other half, with Punalada castle, being by his desire settled on Fernando, who inherited also his grandfather Guzman's estate. Don Rodrigo was sent to the mines—his mother was condemned to banishment—while the Prior of the convent of Vallesanto was doomed to perpetual imprisonment in the Inquisition. Father Thomas received the priory as a gift from the
hands

hands of the Archbishop of Seville. Lastly, the Baron lived not only to see Alphonso and Fernando the first warriors in Spain, and created barons, but even to instruct a great-grandson in the rudiments of the science of warfare; and at last died, at an amazing age, surrounded by a numerous race of heroes, the descendants of the old and illustrious HOUSE OF RAYO.

FINIS.